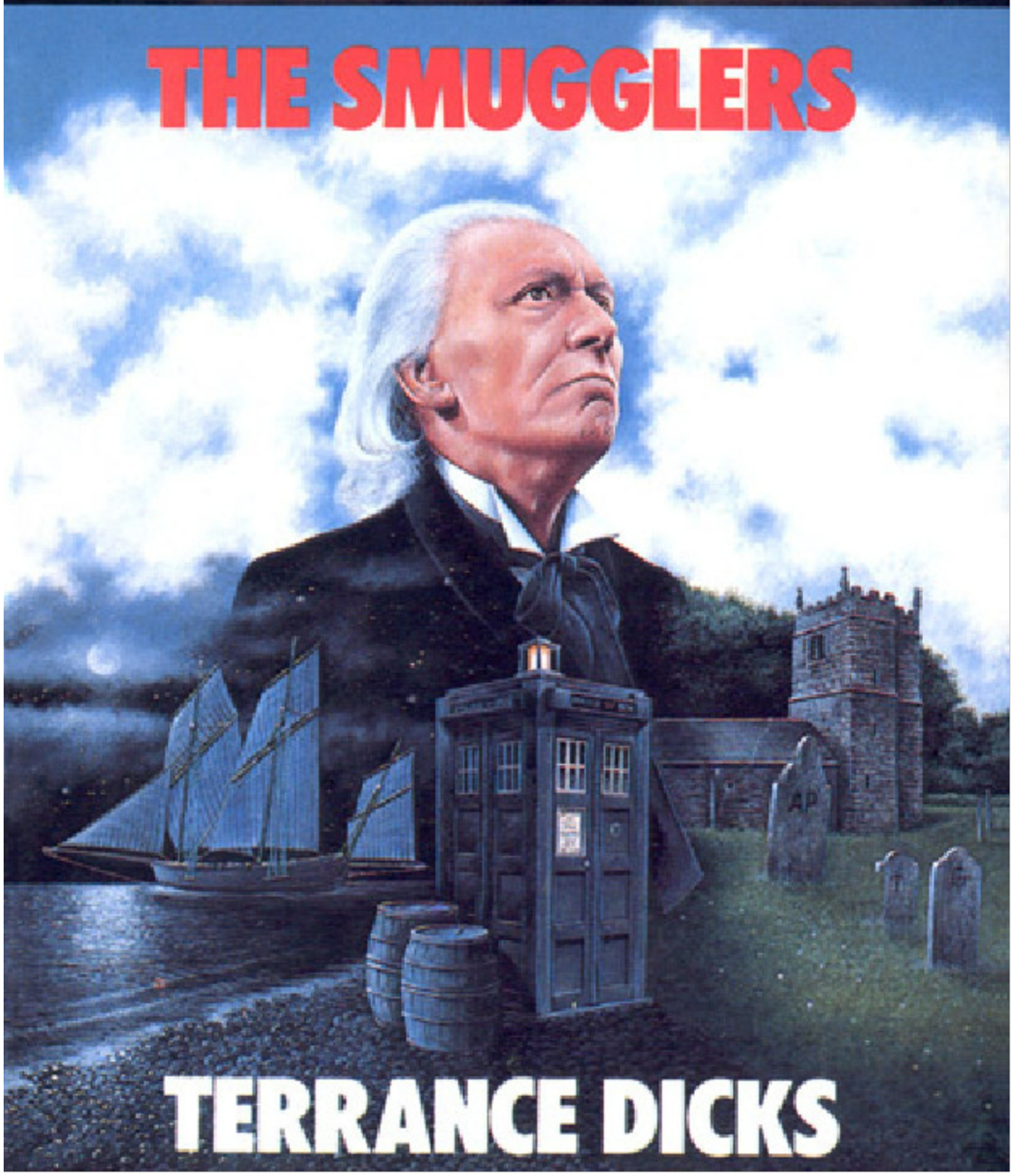
TARGET

No. 133

Doctor Who

THE SMUGGLERS



TERRANCE DICKS

A 17th century Cornish town – villainous pirates roam the seas searching for treasure while the townspeople have turned to smuggling, wheeling and dealing in contraband.

Into this wild and remote place the TARDIS
materialises and the Doctor and his
companions find themselves caught up in the dubious activities of the locals.

When the Doctor is unwittingly given a clue to the whereabouts of the treasure the pirates are determined to extract the information –
whatever the cost . . .

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Science Fiction/TV Tie-in

DOCTOR WHO
THE SMUGGLERS

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TERRANCE DICKS

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1

A Shock for Polly and Ben

A Police box stood in a London square up against the railings that surrounded the garden in the centre. There was an *Out of Order* notice on the door. Police boxes like this were common in the London of the sixties. This, like the others, was a rectangular blue affair with small square windows set high in the sides. Above the door were the words *Police Box* in white lettering, with *Public Call* sandwiched between in smaller letters. Normal Police boxes, which this one, incidentally, was not, had three functions. When the light on the top was flashing, it told any passing policeman that there was a message from HQ.

A policeman on the beat could use the phone in the box to call his superiors. And finally, in an emergency, members of the public could use the phone to call for advice or assistance from the police. In time to come, Police boxes like this would disappear from the streets, made redundant by the advent of the policeman's personal radio. This particular one was about to disappear of its own accord.

An old man strode briskly into the square and came to a halt outside the Police box. He stood for a moment, looking up and down the square, as if waiting for someone.

He wore a long cloak fastened at the neck and a fur hat.

Though old, he was still alert and vigorous and the eyes in the heavily lined face blazed with fierce intelligence.

Suddenly two young people ran into the square. One was a girl in a fashionable denim trouser suit, her long blonde hair tucked beneath a denim cap. With her was a young man in the uniform of an Ordinary Seaman: bell-bottomed trousers, blue raincoat and jersey, close-cropped hair beneath a sailor's hat with HMS *Teazer* on the ribbon.

The old man looked at them and scowled. It was clear that they were not whoever he'd been waiting for. But he greeted them politely enough, and they talked for a few minutes then made their farewells.

The two young people hurried away, and the old man watched them go. Then he began fumbling in his pockets for a key. But he couldn't find it. After going through all his pockets with increasing irritation, the old man reached carefully into a concealed inner pocket and produced what was obviously a spare. Carefully removing the notice from its hook, he opened the door of the Police box and disappeared inside.

All this had been watched by the two young people, who had paused at the edge of the square for a last look back.

Suddenly, the young man smote his forehead in the age-old

'I forgot' gesture, took a key from his pocket and showed it to the girl. They ran to the Police box, but by this time the old man had gone inside and shut the door. There was a moment of heated discussion, and the girl pointed vigorously at the key. After a moment the young sailor shrugged and gave in. He tried the key in the Police box lock. It fitted, and he turned it and opened the door. He ushered the girl inside and then followed her, closing the door behind them.

Seconds later, the light on top of the Police box started to flash. Then, with a strange wheezing, groaning sound, the Police box simply disappeared – much to the amazement of a couple of passing tourists.

Inside the Police box, Polly's hand went to her mouth.

'Good Heavens!'

Polly was a young secretary, a typical dolly-bird of the Swinging Sixties, and she had just come through a particularly terrifying adventure. In a nightclub called

'The Inferno' she had encountered her present companion, Ben, a young Cockney sailor on leave, and a young girl called Dodo who seemed to be travelling with a strange old man known only as 'The Doctor'. All three had subsequently become involved in the extraordinary affair of the War Machines. These were the creations of a power-crazed computer called WOTAN, who had planned to use them to take over first London and then the world. The Doctor, who seemed to be a scientist with an extraordinary range of talents, had finally put paid to the War Machines.

His companion, Dodo, had decided to stop travelling with him and go back to live with her aunt. She'd sent this message, together with her farewells, by way of Polly and Ben. But once they'd delivered it, and said goodbye to the Doctor themselves, Ben had remembered that the Doctor had dropped his key some time ago and had rushed off before Ben could return it. Urged on by Polly, who was consumed with curiosity about the Doctor and the Police box, Ben had used the key to get them inside.

Now, her curiosity satisfied, Polly stood looking around her in utter astonishment. She shook her head wonderingly. 'Good Heavens,' she said again.

Considering what she was seeing, the comment was rather inadequate. She should have been in the cramped surroundings of a Police box, jammed in together with Ben and the old man known as the Doctor. But she wasn't.

Instead, she stood at the entrance to a large brightly-lit control room. In its centre was a many-sided control console, an affair of complicated-looking instrument panels arranged around a transparent centre column, itself packed with complex electronic circuitry. Various odds and ends were dotted about the room, a hatstand, old-fashioned chairs, some rather odd-looking statues.

The Doctor was busy at the control console and he swung round at the sound of Polly's voice. He had taken off hat, coat and scarf revealing checked trousers, old fashioned boots and a frock-coat worn with a cravat and a high wing collar. His whole appearance, shabby, scholarly, with a pronounced nineteenth-century feel to it, contrasted strangely with his ultra-modern surroundings.

Ben was equally amazed. 'Malley, where did all this come from? It *was* a Police box, wasn't it?'

'I think so,' said Polly uncertainly.

The Doctor was glaring at them in indignation. 'What are you doing here? How did you get inside?'

Polly pointed to the key in Ben's hand. 'You dropped your key.'

Ben held out the key. 'That's right.'

The Doctor snatched it from his hand. 'How *dare* you follow me aboard the TARDIS!'

Ben stared at him. 'Aboard the what?'

'TARDIS,' snapped the Doctor. 'It is a vessel for travelling in time and space. Now, why did you follow me?'

'We're terribly sorry if we've annoyed you, Doctor,' said Polly placatingly. 'It was my idea, I'm afraid.'

Ben wandered over to the control console. 'What's all this for, then?'

The Doctor shooed him away. ‘Come away from there –

do you want to cause even more trouble than you have already? Those particular controls are for dematerialisation.’

‘And what does that mean?’

The Doctor pointed to the centre column which was rising and falling steadily. ‘Something you and this young lady have just experienced. You are now travelling in time and space.’

Ben looked at him for a moment, and then burst out laughing. ‘Just make sure I get back by teatime, Doctor.

I’ve got to report back to my ship by midnight.’ Ben was a seaman, at the end of what had turned out to be a very eventful spell of leave.

The Doctor gave him a malevolent smile. ‘I’m afraid it will be a long time before you see your ship again, young man.’ With a shock Ben realised that the Doctor was perfectly serious.

‘When are we going to land?’ asked Polly nervously.

The Doctor sighed. ‘I wish I knew. This is the worst part of any journey. I never know...’

‘Why not?’

The Doctor scowled. ‘Because I have no control over where I go. Nor can I choose the period in which I land...’

He looked hard at the centre column which was rising and falling more slowly now. ‘Stand by! We are about to materialise.’

They watched as the column slowed to a halt. The Doctor touched a control and a monitor screen above the console lit up. It showed rocky walls with a hint of sea beyond. The Doctor peered at the screen, his irascibility forgotten in the excitement of a new arrival. ‘We seem to be in a cave of some sort...’

For a moment Ben looked worried, then he shrugged.

After all, anyone could show you pictures on a screen.

‘Well, thanks for the home-movies, Doctor. Now, if you’ll kindly open the door...’

‘It may not be safe,’ said the Doctor urgently. ‘We don’t know where we are – nor in which age.’

‘I’ll have a little bet with you,’ said Ben cheerfully.

‘Fitzroy Square, London, 1966, OK?’

The Doctor was studying instrument readings. ‘It seems all right. Temperature normal, air good...’ He touched another control and the TARDIS doors opened. ‘Very well, you may leave. But watch your step.’

‘That’s a relief,’ said Ben, heading for the door. ‘You were beginning to make me nervous, Doctor.’

Polly hurried after him. ‘Wait for me, Ben!’

The Doctor shook his head wearily, reluctant to admit that he was saddled with two young humans yet again.

‘How distracting this is. Just when I really thought I was to be alone at last.’

Polly and Ben were standing outside the TARDIS, even more astonished than when they’d first stepped inside.

Then they’d only had a change of dimension to cope with.

Now there was a change of location as well. They weren't in Fitzroy Square at all. They were in a sea cave. It was long and narrow, sand-floored, with the TARDIS set against one rocky wall. To the rear it narrowed to darkness.

Ahead, it opened out onto a sandy beach with a grey sea rolling beyond.

Polly clutched Ben's arm. 'I'm scared. What's happened to us?'

'I dunno,' said Ben helplessly. 'Maybe the old boy's some kind of hypnotist. Pinch me.' Polly pinched him, hard, and he gave a yelp. 'That was real enough!'

The Doctor came out of the TARDIS and locked the door behind him.

'Hey, just a moment,' protested Ben. 'What did you do that for?'

'Because I never leave it unlocked.'

'Doctor, you've got to take us back,' said Polly.

'I can't,' said the Doctor simply.

'You mean you refuse?' accused Ben.

'My dear young man, I cannot guarantee to return to twentieth-century London in the TARDIS...'

Ben turned away. 'Come on, Polly, we'll make our own way back to London.'

'Wait a minute,' said Polly. She wasn't convinced that things were that simple. The Doctor had been right about the change of place. Could it be that he was right about the change of time as well? 'Are you coming with us, Doctor?'

The Doctor threw up his hands. 'I suppose I shall have to. You are obviously quite incapable of looking after yourselves!'

Outside the cave they found themselves on a long strip of beach, the sea on one side, rugged cliffs on the other.

The air was fresh and salty.

Ben shook his head wonderingly. 'Look at all this!'

Polly nodded enthusiastically. 'I can't believe it either.

Isn't this exciting!'

Ben gave her a disgusted look. 'It might be, if I wasn't so pushed for time.'

'But it's a gorgeous spot.'

Ben looked up and down the empty stretch of beach.

'It'd be a lot nicer with a few houses and a bus stop. Where do *you* think we are?'

Polly studied the low, rugged cliffs. 'Looks like Cornwall to me.'

'Cornwall? Are you sure.'

'I reckon so, me 'andsome,' said Polly, in a mock rustic accent.

'Take us hours to get back from here,' said Ben gloomily. He set off towards the cliffs.

'I've got to get back too,' said Polly. 'You're coming with us, aren't you, Doctor?'

'Yes, yes,' said the Doctor pettishly. 'You may know where you are, but you don't yet know when you are.

Goodness knows what trouble you'll land up in.'

But Polly was already on her way. 'Come on, Ben, I'll race you!'

The Doctor watched as the two young people ran off towards the cliffs. He sighed. 'Oh dear! I suppose I'd better make sure they don't come to any harm...' And he trudged off after them.

Climbing the cliffs didn't present any particular problem. They soon found a steep narrow path, and followed it to the top. There they found themselves on a stretch of grassland with the cliff edge on one side and a muddy country lane to the other.

Ahead of them, the lane followed the line of the clifftop, rising to a headland, and there, on top of the rise was the reassuringly familiar shape of a little country church.

Polly gave a gasp of relief. 'We must be in our own time after all!'

'Course we are. You didn't believe all that guff about past and future, did you?'

The Doctor came up to join them. 'We still can't be sure,' he warned.

'Sure?' said Ben scornfully. 'There are millions of churches just like that one.'

'Indeed there are, my dear boy. And most of them have been standing for centuries...'

'Yeah? Well, so have we. Come on, Polly, I've got a train to catch.' He set off towards the church.

Polly gave the Doctor an apologetic look. 'Sorry, Doctor, but I think we'd better try to find a station. We can talk on the train.'

She set off after Ben and the Doctor followed shaking his head. 'Talk on the train, indeed!'

The church was further away than it looked, and Polly would have enjoyed the walk, if it wasn't for the little doubts that still gnawed at her mind. As the lane curved gently inland, she couldn't help noticing that it showed no signs of being 'made up' in any way, no tarmac or macadam, or whatever it was called. Just well-tramped mud. There were no road signs or official notices. No traffic, no signs of electricity pylons or telephone wires...

They reached the church at last and paused to rest in the little churchyard that surrounded it.

Polly bent to peer at a gravestone but it was overgrown with moss. 'It's no use, I can't read it...'

Ben was looking round disgustedly. There was nothing in sight but the church, the graveyard, and the green fields surrounding them. 'You'd think there'd be a house or something. Must be miles to a bus stop!'

The Doctor was studying the church. 'No signs of Victorian restoration. We could be in any time after... oh, sixteen hundred...'

'Well, we're not,' said Ben obstinately. 'We're in good old 1966.'

The Doctor rubbed his chin. 'I don't think so somehow...'

Ben looked at the church. 'Not a soul in sight!'

As if to disprove his words a man stepped round the corner of the church, covering them with a gun. 'Hold fast!'

Polly stared at him in horror. Being held up by an armed man was bad enough. But the gun the man was covering them with was some kind of antique-looking blunderbuss...

The Frightened Man

Not daring to move, Polly studied the newcomer. He was past middle-aged, in his late fifties or early sixties. His face was seamed and weathered, as if from long exposure to wind and sun, and he had a stubble of white whiskers. He wore breeches and buckled shoes, a shiny black coat and a grimy white cravat. There was a sort of shabby respectability about him, a feeling that he was playing some kind of role.

'Please, put that gun away,' said Polly nervously.

The muzzle swung round to cover her. 'Hold thy tongue, lad.'

Polly blinked, then realised that the fact that she was wearing jeans and had her hair tucked under her cap must have misled the man. She decided it might be wiser not to correct the wrong impression.

After a brief puzzled glance at Ben, the man studied the Doctor. 'Indeed, you seem a gentleman,' he said grudgingly. 'But why d'you come on foot, with these lads as company?'

The Doctor realised that the man was expecting to see a coach - or at the very least a horse. 'We stepped aside from our journey to walk along the cliffs. Now we are lost.'

'Foreigners, be ye?'

'Well, we are not from this part of the country,' said the Doctor evasively.

The man looked out of the gate, the way they'd come.

'And there's no more of ye than this?'

'Only the three of us,' said the Doctor calmly. 'Three travellers seeking shelter.'

The man leaned forwards, peering at the Doctor over the barrel of his gun. 'And you came by land? Not from -

the sea?'

He dropped his voice on the last word, as if there was something dreadful about it.

'No,' said the Doctor reassuringly. 'Not by sea.'

The man lowered his gun. 'Very well... I can give you no shelter, but I'll give thee sustenance, and direction. Come!'

He turned and scuttled inside the church.

'He's a queer one,' said Ben. 'Look at that gear he's got on.

The Doctor smiled with maddening I-told-you-so superiority. 'That gear, Ben, is standard clothing of the seventeenth-century. I'm very much afraid, young man, that you are out of luck!'

He followed the man into the church, and Polly and Ben trailed after him.

Inside the church the man stood waiting for them. He led them through a wooden door and into a cluttered stone flagged room containing a battered desk littered with papers. From a corner cupboard he produced a tray holding a bottle, a water jug and some battered pewter mugs.

'Here's brandy, and water...' He filled the brandy bottle from a keg in the corner.

'Just water for me, please,' said Polly hurriedly.

The man poured her some water, then mixed brandy and water for Ben, the Doctor and himself.

The Doctor quaffed his brandy and water with evident appreciation. 'This is very kind of you, sir. Now, if you could direct us to the nearest inn... ?'

‘Aye, in time, in good time...’

The Doctor sensed that the man wanted to find out more about them before letting them go - as if, for some strange reason, he saw every stranger as a potential menace...

The man came forward and peered into the Doctor’s face. ‘I don’t know ye, do I?’

The Doctor met the suspicious stare unwaveringly. ‘No, we’ve never met before, I’m sure.’

‘Aye, ‘tis true,’ the man muttered. A fresh worry seemed to strike him. ‘You saw no other upon the road?’ Again, he lowered his voice. ‘Nor - on the sea?’

‘Didn’t see a blind thing,’ said Ben cheerfully.

‘Expecting someone are you?’

‘Speak when thee’s spoken to lad,’ the man snarled.

‘Look here, mate,’ said Ben truculently, ‘I was only -’

‘Ben!’ snapped the Doctor, cutting him off. He turned back to the man and said soothingly, ‘I assure you we met no one and saw nothing, either by land or by sea... *Are* you expecting somebody - some friends perhaps?’

The man laughed bitterly. ‘Friends! Avery’s lads be no friends of mine, never say that!’

‘Avery,’ said the Doctor thoughtfully.

‘Do ye know the name?’

The Doctor shook his head.

‘Then you be the better for it,’ snapped the man.

‘This Avery...’ said the Doctor. ‘Are you expecting him?’

Another harsh, mirthless laugh. ‘Expecting Avery? He’s been dead and buried, these long years past. But his spirit lives... Aye, in the black hearts of those who follow in his wake...’

Ben’s professional interest was aroused by the nautical imagery. ‘This Avery... was he a sailor?’

‘Who mentioned sailors then? What do I know of the sea or sailors, I do but tend this church.’

Polly looked uncertainly at his shabby figure. ‘Are you the priest here, then?’

The man sighed unctuously. ‘Alas, the word of God touched me but late, boy. I am Churchwarden here. Joseph Longfoot be my name, and I be as good a Christian as any in this parish.’ He glared at Polly as if challenging her to deny it.

‘You seem - afraid,’ said the Doctor suddenly. ‘Can we help?’

‘Thee - help?’ Once again Longfoot gave his cracked and mirthless laugh. ‘Help, against Pike, and his hook? No, thee can’t help...’

‘Pike’s hook?’ said Ben, puzzled. ‘What’s that? Who’s Pike?’

‘The blackest name I know, boy,’ whispered Longfootfearfully. ‘Never say the name! Never say it to my face, d’ye hear?’ He staggered back against the brandy keg.

It looked as if this wasn’t his first visit to it that day, thought the Doctor.

He noticed that Longfoot was holding his right hand cradled in his left, holding it close to his chest. ‘Have you hurt your hand?’

The Churchwarden held out his hand. ‘”Tis naught –

the little finger is put out – ‘Twill mend.’

The Doctor took the hand in both of his. It was hardened, calloused, and the little finger stuck out at an awkward angle. ‘Dislocated,’ he muttered. Gripping Longfoot’s

wrist with his left hand, he gave a sudden yank on the little finger with his right, setting it back in the socket.

Longfoot gave a fearful howl and leaped back, snatching his hand away. He held it up in front of him and wiggled the little finger experimentally. 'Tis cured! Ye've healing hands, master. I thank ye.'

'It was nothing,' said the Doctor brusquely. There was something very odd about this Churchwarden, he'd decided. The fear, the suspicion, the sudden changes of mood. The Doctor could smell trouble, and with two new and inexperienced companions on his hands, he wanted no part of it. Besides, what kind of Churchwarden kept a barrel of brandy in his vestry?

The Doctor moved towards the door. 'And now we really must be on our way.'

Longfoot grasped his sleeve. 'No... don't leave me yet!'

'Look, we've got to go,' said Ben awkwardly. 'We've got to get back to -' He was about to say 'back to the TARDIS', but checked himself just in time. 'Er, back to the beach,' he concluded lamely.

'There be no beach,' cackled Longfoot. 'Not at this hour. The tide be high.'

'The tide!' Ben looked worriedly at the Doctor. If the tide was high, the entrance to the sea cave - and their access to the TARDIS - was cut off.

'Ah, of course, high tide,' said the Doctor calmly. 'We shall just have to wait till it goes out again.'

There was a low rumble of thunder, and Polly looked uneasily around the gloomy vestry. 'Let's go, Doctor.'

The Doctor hesitated, torn between caution and curiosity. 'We could stay a little longer if you like,' he offered.

But the Churchwarden, with another of his sudden changes of mood, shook his head gloomily. 'No, best you go. This is no place for a gentleman like you, nor for lads like these either.' He led them to the church door and pointed on down the road. 'The inn is some two miles on.

'Tis a straight road...' There was another rumble of thunder, and lightning flashed across the darkening sky.

'Go!' said the Churchwarden fiercely. 'Go now, while ye still may!' He bundled them out of the door.

Ben and Polly set off through the graveyard. 'And I called it guff,' muttered Ben. 'Either that bloke's a nutter, or we really are in the seventeenth-century.'

At the gate, the Churchwarden said, 'That way lies the inn, and the road is true.'

'Thank you for all your help,' said the Doctor politely.

Longfoot gave a sort of jerky salute. 'And you for yours, sir. You be a true gentleman. Now, go thy way quickly -

and, sir?'

'Yes, what is it?'

The Churchwarden leaned close and lowered his voice.

'Have a care, when you reach the inn, I say. Best guard your tongue, and look no further than thy comfort and needs.'

'We only seek shelter for a while...'

'Heed my words, sir. Be watchful!'

The Doctor looked thoughtfully at him, wondering what lay behind the strange warning. ‘Thank you - and now, we must say goodbye.’

As the Doctor turned to go, Longfoot darted forward again. ‘One word more, sir...’

The Doctor turned back patiently. ‘Yes?’

The Churchwarden’s voice was no more than a fearful whisper. ‘Should you come this way again, and find me -

gone...’ He looked fearfully about him and then went on,

‘remember these words.’ His voice became a sing-song:

“This is Deadman’s secret key.

Kingward, Smallbeer and Gurney”

He accentuated the last syllable of the last word, forcing the rhyme.

Even the Doctor was baffled by this. ‘Remember it? But why? To what purpose?’

‘’Tis a secret well worth the remembering, sir. For your kindness, and your courtesy, d’ye understand.’

Somehow Polly realised that Longfoot had met with very little kindness and courtesy in his life. ‘Goodbye,’ she said gently. ‘And thank you.’

‘Godspeed,’ said the Churchwarden. He turned and scurried back into the shelter of his church.

The Doctor, Ben and Polly set off down the road towards the inn. Big raindrops were splashing down from the grey sky, and they had little chance of reaching shelter before the coming storm.

As the Doctor and his friends disappeared around the bend in the road, a man rose from his hiding place behind one of the larger gravestones. He was big and muscular and moved with catlike stealthiness. He wore the leather breeches and striped shirt of a common seaman, but there was a gaudy scarf knotted about his neck and a huge gold earring dangled from one ear. His skin was deeply tanned, and the rolled up shirtsleeves showed hairy arms covered with intricate tattoos. But perhaps his face was the strangest thing about him. It was a moon-face, round and bland and curiously smooth. He was completely bald except for a little fringe of white hair just above his ears, and this gave him the expression of a sort of giant baby, a strange mixture of innocence and malevolence. The baby face with its curiously sinister smile explained his nickname. People called him Cherub.

He stood for a moment, looking after the Doctor and his companions thoughtfully, then moved silently towards the church door.

He paused by the door for a moment, taking a long thin knife from his broad leather belt. He tested point and edge on a grimy calloused thumb, and then disappeared silently inside the church.

Kewper the innkeeper, a burly unshaven man in a grimy leather apron, came out of the back door of his inn and looked thoughtfully up at the grey and threatening sky.

‘Tom!’ he bellowed.

A ragged stable-boy emerged from the gloom of the nearby stables. ‘Aye, master?’

Kewper beckoned him closer. Leaning down, he spoke in a low, confidential voice. ‘There’s business afoot boy. A message for the Churchwarden. You must take it now.’

Tom looked up at the grey skies. ‘But master -’

‘Do as you’re bid, boy. Tell him I’ve had word... word from our friends.’

Tom nodded knowingly. ‘Gentlemen friends... down the coast?’

‘Aye... Tell him a delivery can be expected soon.

I’ll send word when I’ve made final arrangements.’

‘I’ll tell him, master. Can I take the mare?’

‘Aye. But go now, and be quick about it.’

Tom moved to the stable to get the mare. Two miles there and two miles back, and in the pouring rain as well.

Still, this was business - the Gentlemen’s business, dangerous but profitable. He led out the mare, throwing a sack across her back for a saddle and wrapping another about her shoulders. Using an up-turned bucket for a mounting block, Tom scrambled on the mare, kicked her ribs with his heels and galloped away. As he rode past the front of the inn, he caught sight of three odd-looking strangers hurrying towards the front door...

The threatened rain had turned into a steady downpour long before the Doctor and his companions reached the inn and by the time they reached its threshold they were soaked to the skin. They squelched into the big stone-flagged room and stood looking around them. It was, thought the Doctor, much what you might expect. Wooden booths around the walls, a bar at the far end with bottles and barrels, and, thank goodness, a huge, open fireplace with a blazing fire. A burly man in a leather apron had come forward to meet them.

‘How do you do?’ said the Doctor. ‘You are the innkeeper I presume?’

‘Aye, that’s me. Jacob Kewper. We’ve no rooms.’

The Doctor looked hard at him, surprised by the instant hostility. ‘We want shelter for one night only, my man.’

‘Strangers are not welcome in these parts,’ growled Kewper. ‘And,’ he added mysteriously, ‘nor are they always what they seem.’

Polly looked at the Doctor. ‘That’s what the Churchwarden said.’

Kewper swung round on her. ‘Eh boy, what’s that?

What do you know of our Churchwarden, my lad?’

‘Your Churchwarden told us we would find shelter here,’ said the Doctor calmly. ‘It seems he was wrong.’

Kewper looked uneasily at him. ‘If he said as much... If you know our Churchwarden, then you’ll know his name.’

There was a sudden ring of authority in the Doctor’s voice. ‘The Churchwarden’s name is Longfoot. Joseph Longfoot. Does his word mean nothing to you?’

It was clear that it did, because Kewper’s attitude changed at once. ‘Strangers are not welcome here, as I said.

But friends of our Churchwarden...’ he managed a smile. ‘I beg your pardon, sir.’

‘Granted, my good fellow,’ said the Doctor airily. ‘Now -

rooms, a meal, a hot drink for us all... Is that possible?

We’ll dry out here, by the fire.’

‘Indeed it is, sir,’ said the innkeeper. ‘It shall be done!’

He hurried away.

The Doctor and his companions moved to the fireplace.

Ben looked at Polly and grinned. ‘Well, my lad?’

‘Very funny,’ said Polly. ‘I do wish everyone would stop calling me that. It feels very odd.’

The Doctor looked round the room. There were only a scattering of customers in the place, but they looked a rough, hardbitten lot. ‘In this company, my dear, I think it best to let them think as they do. After all, what would they say to a maiden in trousers, eh?’

‘Probably die laughing,’ said Ben.

‘Oh, you would think it funny,’ snapped Polly. ‘You and your bell-bottom sense of humour.’

‘Listen to our dolly-rockers duchess, then!’

‘Guard your tongue, boy,’ warned the Doctor and Ben fell silent for a moment. Then he said sullenly. ‘What I want to know, Doctor, is this - how are you going to get us out of here?’

‘We shall return to the TARDIS at low tide and hope that our next landing is back in 1966.’

‘You don’t sound too confident,’ said Polly.

‘I’m not, my child. Our next landing could be in the far distant future.’

‘Great,’ said Ben bitterly. ‘There probably won’t even be a navy by the time I get back.’

‘Ben, listen,’ said Polly firmly. ‘It’s no use getting crabby. For the moment we’re here in the seventeenth-century. We’ve just got to like it and lump it!’

For a moment Ben scowled at her. Then he grinned.

‘All right, we’ll call a truce.’ He looked round. ‘Nice old pub, this. I wonder what the beer’s like?’

The Doctor said thoughtfully. ‘They seem very suspicious of us, don’t they?’

‘Well, they certainly don’t like strangers,’ agreed Polly.

‘I wonder why?’ said Ben.

The Doctor was wondering too, though given the time and their position by the sea there was one all too obvious explanation. But he was certain of one thing - it would be safer not to get involved. ‘Don’t let it worry you,’ he said reassuringly. ‘We won’t be stopping long enough to find out!’

But the Doctor was wrong...

3

Longfoot's Friends

The skies were dark and the church was filled with shadows. In the vestry everything was silent. An inner door stood gaping open, revealing a flight of steps leading downwards. Suddenly a bobbing light appeared at the bottom of the steps. Then came the sound of footsteps...

Longfoot, the Churchwarden ascended the stairs, lantern in hand. At the top of the stairs, Cherub stood waiting.

Longfoot backed away. 'Master Cherub!'

Cherub smiled. 'Aye... it's good to see an old shipmate again, eh, Joe? We had good times aboard *The Albatross*, when you was mate.'

'Them days is all past and gone.'

'But not forgotten, eh, Joe,' said Cherub softly. 'You wouldn't forget your old friends, would you, Joe?'

'I ain't no friend of yours,' said Longfoot fiercely. 'I'm Churchwarden here now. A good Christian man!'

Cherub gave a mocking laugh. 'Ah, you always had leanings towards the Good Book, eh Joe? Holy Joe Longfoot, mate of the *Black Albatross!* '

'Not no more I'm not!'

'We all misses you, Joe,' said Cherub softly. 'And Captain, why he do miss you most of all.'

'Captain Pike?' whispered Longfoot fearfully.

'The very same. You owe him something, matey - and he wants what's his.'

'I've got naught that's his,' protested Longfoot.

'If you ain't got it, matey, then you know its whereabouts. Avery's gold!'

'Avery's gold is cursed. No Christian man would touch it!' Longfoot came up into the room, setting the lantern on the table.

Cherub moved closer, his face evil in the flickering light. 'Ah, but we ain't all like you, Holy Joe. We ain't all afraid of the curse - and that gold is ours by rights.'

''Tis no man's rights.'

'We'll decide that,' said Cherub. 'When we shares out the loot.'

'You'll never find it -' Longfoot broke off as the knife appeared in Cherub's hand. Its blade glinted in the lantern light.

'Won't we, Joseph, my old mate?' whispered Cherub.

'Ain't you a-goin' to tell me, eh?'

Longfoot's voice was high-pitched with fear. 'It ain't no good you threatening me, Cherub. I got friends now -

powerful friends.'

Cherub chuckled. 'They'll need to be, to get the better of Pike!'

'Don't think they couldn't!'

'Ah, but where be your friends now, eh matey? Gone.

The old man and the two lads... What does he know?'

'Know of what? I only directed him on his way.'

'Where to, matey?' Longfoot didn't answer, and suddenly Cherub's knife was at his throat. 'Where to, say I?'

'To the inn,' croaked Longfoot. 'To the inn, for shelter.'

‘Ah, but who was he, matey? What was he to you?’

‘A passing traveller, no more than that!’

Cherub wasn’t convinced. ‘Matey, I *saw* you. Saw you whispering in his ear. What was it you was a-saying, eh?’

‘It was nothing...’

‘Joseph, Joseph,’ said Cherub reproachfully. ‘You wouldn’t be a-trying to *sell* what you know, would you - to *strangers?* ’

‘I know nothing of what you want, Master Cherub.’

‘But you told him something,’ insisted Cherub. ‘And you b’aint a fool, Joe. So you better tell me - now!’

‘You can rot in hell!’ shrieked Longfoot. He made a sudden dash for the wall, where the blunderbuss hung on its hooks. Cherub made no attempt to pursue him. He just stood there, the knife gleaming in his hand. He tossed it up, and caught it by the blade. His arm swept up, and back and forwards... Longfoot was reaching upwards for the blunderbuss. Just as his fingers touched it, he jerked and twitched and then stumbled backwards. He staggered a few steps and then pitched forward face down, the hilt of Cherub’s knife projecting from between his shoulderblades. Cherub ran and knelt beside him, wrenching his head round so he could see his face. Not dead yet, but dying fast, Longfoot stared wide-eyed at his murderer.

Cherub put his lips to the dying man’s ear. ‘You’re a fool, Joe Longfoot! Now, before you goes to join your dead shipmates, tell me what I want to know. Speak up!’

Longfoot gathered his failing strength and whispered feebly. ‘Avery’s curse on ye for a black villain, Cherub!’

Cherub grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him viciously. ‘Speak, damn your eyes!’

Longfoot gasped, and slumped forwards, dead.

Disgustedly Cherub released him. He stared down at the body. ‘You were ever a talker, Joe. ‘Twouldn’t be like you to go to Davy Jones’ locker silent, matey.’ He tugged the knife from Longfoot’s back, wiped it on the dead man’s coat and then straightened up. Slipping the knife back in his belt he looked down at his dead shipmate. ‘I reckon as how you told the old feller, matey. So, we’d better find that old feller and get our hooks into him!’

The old feller in question, together with his two young companions, was sitting by the fire in the inn. They were all feeling very much better, thanks to liberal supplies of hot food and drink, and a chance to dry out by the roaring fire. Outside the rain was still lashing down, and the number of their fellow patrons was much the same, various comings and goings having more or less balanced out.

‘I’ve seen a few shady customers in my time,’ muttered Ben, ‘but this crowd beats the lot.’

‘They’re fantastic,’ agreed Polly.

The Doctor was studying a little knot of customers, clustered round the landlord at the bar. Somehow they looked even more villainous than the rest.

‘Cheerful looking lot, aren’t they?’ said Ben. ‘I wonder what they’re up to between them?’

The Doctor frowned. ‘I think we would do well to remember the words of the Churchwarden. He warned us to keep our thoughts only on our own affairs...’

Suddenly a grimy, rain-soaked urchin staggered into the bar and staggered over to Kewper. ‘Sir, sir...’

They heard Kewper growl, ‘Lower your voice lad.

What’s the trouble?’

‘It’s the Churchwarden, Master Kewper.’

‘Drunk as usual, was he?’

‘He was dead!’ The word came out in a sort of penetrating whisper, and a buzz of concern ran around the bar.

Kewper stared at the boy as if he just couldn’t take the news in. ‘Dead! How?’

‘Knife in the back,’ whispered Tom. ‘He seemed to be...

smiling.’

Kewper rubbed his bristly chin. ‘Did he now?’

‘The door was wide open too - but not a soul to be seen.’

Kewper looked round the bar. ‘None of the lads have been there this day.’ His eyes fell on the Doctor and his companions. ‘But the strangers were there. And who but a stranger would kill Joseph Longfoot, eh?’

‘None as I knows of round here,’ confirmed Tom. ‘He’d no money, and no enemies neither.’

‘Word must be passed on,’ said Kewper. ‘Tom, you’d best go and tell your tale to the Squire. Ask him to come -

he’s the magistrate.’

Tom looked at him in astonishment. ‘Bring the Squire, *here?* ’

‘Aye, and as fast as the mare can go. Away with you now!’

Polly, who was dozing by the roaring fire, didn’t seem to have taken any of this in, but the Doctor and Ben exchanged looks of alarm. As strangers they were bound to be first suspected in any local crime - and they weren’t really in any position to answer questions. Ben glanced meaningly towards the door and the Doctor nodded. There might be much to be said for a hasty retreat. On the other hand to be caught running away would make them look guiltier than ever.

Suddenly the decision was taken out of their hands. The bar door crashed open and a little group of men poured into the room. They were dressed in seamen’s clothing and they were swarthy and villainous and armed to the teeth.

Their leader was a huge bald-headed man with a gold earring dangling from one ear.

His name was Cherub.

He swept the bar with a keen, fierce gaze, and his eyes settled on the Doctor. Cat-footed he padded over to him. ‘I want you, old feller.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ said the Doctor coldly.

‘Don’t you come the fine gent with me, matey. We’re agoin’ to have words, you and me!’

He leaned forward and grabbed the Doctor’s arm, as if about to haul him to his feet.

Ben jumped to *his* feet. ‘Take your dirty hands off him, mate.’

Cherub let go of the Doctor and swung round. Suddenly there was a long thin knife in his hand. ‘Do what, lad?’

Ben backed away. ‘I said lay off him. What’s he done to you?’

‘What indeed,’ said the Doctor. ‘I’ve never laid eyes on you before, my man.’

‘Ah, but we got a mutual friend, eh? Holy Joe Longfoot!’

Ben stared at him. ‘You mean that Churchwarden?’

‘He merely gave us directions,’ said the Doctor. ‘He helped us on our way. He’s barely even an acquaintance.’

Cherub leaned forward. ‘Was an acquaintance,’ he whispered. He mimed a throat-cutting gesture. ‘Him and me had a bit of a falling-out, d’ye see? Trouble is, he forgot to give me a certain urgent message before he, er, passed over.’ He smiled sinisterly at the Doctor. ‘But he told you, didn’t he, matey?’

‘How do you know about our meeting with Mr Longfoot?’ demanded the Doctor.

‘Because I was on the lookout, wasn’t I, matey?’

‘Well, you’re wrong about this message,’ said Ben firmly.

Cherub ignored him, and leaned over the Doctor threateningly. ‘I wants to know what he told you. Speak up, old feller!’

Ben sprang suddenly at Cherub, hoping to wrest away the knife. But before he got anywhere near him, one of Cherub’s henchmen clubbed him down with a marlin-spike, and Ben thudded to the ground. Polly jumped up, opening her mouth to scream, but before any sound could emerge, another seaman grabbed her from behind, clapping his hand over her mouth.

Somehow Polly managed to pull the hand away for a moment. ‘You leave the Doctor alone -’ She broke off as the seaman’s grimy hand clamped back over her mouth.

‘A Doctor, eh?’ said Cherub softly. ‘Well, speak up, old sawbones - afore we make ye.’

The Doctor looked at him unafraid. ‘Don’t harm my young friends.’

Cherub reached a decision. ‘We won’t - if you comes along quietly.’ He pulled the Doctor to his feet.

‘Where are you taking me?’ demanded the Doctor.

‘Wait and see, old sawbones. Wait and see!’ He shoved the Doctor into the middle of his companions and they bustled him out of the room.

The sailor holding Polly flung her to the ground, and she landed beside Ben. As she fell she heard Cherub growl,

‘To the beach, ye scum. Look lively now!’

‘Help,’ screamed Polly. ‘Somebody help!’

Kewper slouched over, a little group of his customers behind him.

Polly looked up at him. ‘Please, help us. Those ruffians have taken the Doctor. And they’ve hurt Ben...’

‘How bad is the lad?’

Polly lifted Ben’s head. ‘He’s still unconscious. And his head’s bleeding.’

Kewper knelt down and examined Ben for a moment.

‘Aye, but he’s not dead, is he?’ Kewper turned to Tom, who’s departure had been delayed by recent dramatic events. ‘See if those villains are still about.’

Tom ran to the door and looked out into the driving rain. ‘Not a sign of no one, Master.’

‘Then be off and fetch the squire as I told you, boy.

Quickly, now.’

As Tom hurried away, Polly said, ‘The Squire? What can he do? All I went is to get the Doctor back safely again.’

‘The Squire is the law in these parts,’ growled Kewper.

‘And just you hold your tongue in front of your elders, you young cub.’

‘You don’t understand,’ sobbed Polly. ‘I think they were threatening to kill the Doctor.’

‘Wait - and be silent,’ snarled Kewper, and turned away.

The Doctor meanwhile had been bundled into a cart, covered over with hay, and driven at a rattling pace out of the inn yard.

When the cart reached the cliff tops he was hauled out, bustled unceremoniously down the steep path that led to the sea, and flung into a waiting longboat. The seamen clambered in after him and the boat was rowed away. The Doctor submitted to these various indignities without protest. For one thing, he was hopelessly outnumbered.

Moreover, the further he could lure these thugs from Polly and Ben the better. And finally, the Doctor, as usual, was consumed with curiosity. He wanted to find out exactly what was going on, and for the moment going along with his captors seemed as good a way as any.

Jammed between two burly seamen, the Doctor squinted up into the driving rain and saw without much surprise that they were approaching a black and sinister-looking sailing ship, anchored just inside the bay.

Kewper stood waiting on the doorstep as the Squire cantered up on his fine black hunter, followed by Tom on the scrubby little mare. Tom scrambled down and and took the Squire’s reins.

The Squire jumped down and turned to Kewper, as Tom led the horses into the stables. ‘What’s this I hear, Jacob? Trouble?’ He was a big, florid-looking man, bluff and authoritative, yet somehow jerky and nervous at the same time.

‘Aye, trouble, Squire,’ confirmed the innkeeper. ‘There be strangers here, too...’

‘Then let’s deal with them,’ said the Squire, and strode into the inn.

4

Pike

Polly knelt by Ben, desperately trying to revive him. ‘Ben, Ben...’ But Ben lay pale-faced and still, blood oozing from the cut on the back of his head.

A strange voice said, ‘So these are your strangers, landlord?’ Polly looked up to see a plump, round-faced man looming over her. He was more richly dressed than any of those around him, and she guessed that this must be the Squire.

‘Aye, these are the ones, Squire,’ said Kewper. ‘One of them’s wounded it seems.’

‘Yes, and his wound needs binding.’ The Squire turned to Tom, who had put away the horses and followed him into the inn. ‘Cloths and water, quickly, now, Tom. And a drop of brandy, eh Kewper?’

As Tom scurried away, and Kewper slouched over to the bar to fetch the brandy, the Squire turned to scrutinise Polly. Ignoring his searching glance, she asked anxiously,

‘Will Ben be all right?’

The Squire straightened up. ‘Aye, lad, he will. Now, where’s your Master?’

‘He’s been kidnapped,’ said Polly agitatedly. ‘You’ve got to save him!’

‘Kidnapped, eh? And who were the ruffians who did it?’

Polly had been too shocked and frightened to make much of an eye-witness, but she gave as good a description of the attackers as she could manage. ‘There were four or five of them, I think. They looked like sailors...’

‘An extraordinary tale,’ said the Squire. ‘Now, boy, tell me about yourself.’

Polly was utterly thrown by the unexpected question.

‘Me? But it’s the Doctor we should be -’

‘Aye, and you can tell me about him too,’ roared the Squire. ‘And let’s have no beating about the bush, boy. I want to know exactly who you are and where you’ve come from.’

The dilemma was one which the Doctor and earlier companions had often had to face. To be found, strangely dressed in a strange place, with no very convincing explanation to offer for your presence, can cause problems in either past or present.

The Doctor had become very skilful at deflecting awkward questions, but Polly just didn’t have the experience. ‘What about the Doctor?’ she repeated obstinately. ‘They’ll kill him if we don’t find him.’

They were interrupted by Tom, who returned with a bowl of water and some clean rags, and Kewper who silently handed her a mug of brandy.

‘See to your friend, boy,’ ordered the Squire. ‘And after that, if you want help, then I want the truth - the whole truth. Understand?’ He strode off to the bar, with Kewper trailing after him.

Aided by Tom, who seemed not without experience of such things, Polly made the best job she could of cleaning and binding Ben’s wound, tearing off a long strip of rag to use as a bandage.

Ben showed signs of reviving during all this, and when Tom took the used rags and the water away, Polly held the pewter mug of brandy to Ben’s lips. He sipped and spluttered, then managed to struggle up on to one elbow.

‘Blimey, my nut...’ He looked round dazedly. ‘What happened to the Doctor?’

‘Those men took him off. Ben, I think we’re in trouble.’

‘What? How?’

Polly pointed. ‘You see that big man over there at the bar, talking to the landlord? He’s the local Squire. He wants to know who we are and where we’re from.’

Ben gasped. ‘You haven’t told him?’

‘Of course not, how could I? But he says if we don’t speak, then he won’t help us to find the Doctor.’ She looked over at the bar. The Squire had finished his brandy, and his conversation with Kewper, and had turned to study them. ‘Better think up a story, Ben, he’s coming back.’

‘Blimey,’ said Ben. ‘What are we going to tell him?’

‘I don’t know, but we’d better make it good. We’ve just got to find the Doctor and get away from here.’

Moments later the massive figure of the Squire was looming over them. He looked down at Ben. ‘Come to, have you, boy? Now, I’ve just told your young friend here, I want some information - and so far he’s refused to give it to me. I demand that you tell me the truth.’

History wasn’t Ben’s strong point, and he knew that it was quite beyond him to make up a convincing explanation for his presence in - when was it? - the seventeenth-century. Instead he decided to bargain. ‘You’ll get all the information you want - when we get the Doctor back.’

‘Speak civil to the Squire, boy,’ snarled Kewper.

But Ben wasn’t impressed. ‘Well, why don’t you all do something about rescuing him, instead of just standing there?’

‘Be silent, sir!’ roared the Squire. ‘I hold you both to be knaves and rogues of highly suspicious intent. As Magistrate of this Borough I hereby arrest you both!’

‘Arrest us for what?’ demanded Ben indignantly.

‘For the murder of the Churchwarden. And for this villainous deed you shall be imprisoned until the next Assizes, where your punishment will be determined.’

Despite the geezer’s funny old fashioned language, thought Ben, the basic situation was clear enough. They’d been nicked.

The Doctor too was still a prisoner, but by no means a prisoner of the law. Just the contrary, in fact.

By dint of hard rowing the long boat had finally managed to pull up alongside the sinister-looking ship.

The Doctor was lashed into a bosun’s chair and hauled up on board, while his villainous captors scrambled monkey-like up the ropes hanging from the side.

As they gathered on the rain-swept decks, Cherub leered into the Doctor’s face. ‘Come along now, my beauty!’

‘Where are you taking me?’ asked the Doctor. Despite his captivity there was still an impressive dignity about him.

‘To see the Captain, matey. You’ll find he likes a little polite conversation with a fine gentleman such as yourself.’

The Doctor was bustled along the decks, and then down some steps to a sort of coachhouse section amid-ships.

Cherub halted him outside an elaborately carved wooden door and rapped respectfully. From inside a deep throaty voice snarled, ‘Enter!’ They entered.

In marked contrast to what the Doctor had seen of the rest of the ship, the cabin was lavishly furnished and decorated. There were silk hangings and, in one corner, a cushioned day-bed.

In the centre of the room there was a carved oaken table littered with bottles, silver goblets and the remains of a lavish meal served on silver plate. Behind the table sat a massive, black-bearded man, luxuriously dressed in the clothes of a fine gentleman of the period, his wig well-curled. The contrast with Cherub and his scruffy band was almost ludicrous. The bearded man's left hand clutched a silver goblet brimming with wine. His right was out of sight, resting on his knee beneath the table. He seemed far from pleased at having his meal interrupted. 'Cherub!' he roared. 'What in hell's name have you dragged in here now?'

'Dragged in, indeed,' said the Doctor tartly. 'I demand an explanation, sir.'

'Silence,' bellowed the Captain. 'Well, Cherub?'

Cherub knuckled his forehead in salute. ''Tis like this here, Cap'n. Holy Joe Longfoot's dead.'

'Dead? How so?'

Cherub was looking anxious. 'Well, truth to tell, Cap'n, him and me had words. And poor Holy Joe, he passed away, before he could tell me his secret.'

'What!' This time the Captain's roar shook the cabin. 'I sent ye to question him, not kill him, fool!'

'Ah, but harkee, Cap'n,' said Cherub hastily. 'Before Holy Joe passed on, he spoke long with this here sawbones.'

'Aha!' said the Captain exultantly. 'So he knows, does he?'

'Aye, Cap'n. But the old sawbones won't talk, not to me he won't.'

The Captain glared at the Doctor, who met his gaze unafraid. 'Won't talk?' snarled the black-bearded man.

'Well, you'll talk to me, matey, or my name's not Samuel Pike!' Whipping his right arm from beneath the table, he slammed it down with a jarring crash. The arm ended not in a hand but in a gleaming steel hook. It bit deep into the scarred wood of the table top.

5

Pirate Treasure

Observant, even in moments of danger, the Doctor noticed that Pike's wasn't the usual seaman's hook, but a much more elaborate affair altogether. It was made in the shape of the blade of a soldier's pike-head, a sort of combination of spear-head and barb. It was presumably a play on the Captain's name, thought the Doctor, and this touch of whimsical vanity gave him a valuable clue to the man's character. So too did the pirate's fashionable clothing and curled wig, and the lavish decor of the cabin. Know your enemy, thought the Doctor. He was beginning to form a plan...

'Well,' snarled Pike. 'Are you going to talk?'

'I have nothing to tell you,' said the Doctor calmly.

Pike looked questioningly at Cherub who said, 'They did talk, Cap'n, I saw 'em. I saw Holy Joe a-whispering in the sawbones' ear, all secret-like.'

'I don't think I even know this Holy Joe you are referring to,' said the Doctor loftily.

'Holy Joe? He's an old shipmate of ours,' said Pike broodingly.

'Holy Joe Longfoot, blast his eyes!'

'Aye,' snarled Cherub. 'The Churchwarden to you, sawbones.'

The Doctor nodded. 'I see. And he was one of your crew?'

For some reason, Pike found himself answering his prisoner's questions, rather than the other way round. No doubt about it, the old sawbones had a gentlemanly air about him. 'Longfoot and me and Cherub here, we was all mates together, serving under Avery.'

'Avery,' said the Doctor musingly.

'Cap'n Avery,' said Pike. 'One of the sharpest skippers that ever sailed out o' Bristol Port. And one of the blackest-hearted too! Morgan was a woman compared to him.'

The Doctor said, 'Yes, of course. Avery the pirate! I should have known.'

'Don't play the innocent with us,' snarled Cherub. 'You know what Holy Joe was hiding, sawbones.'

'He took the plunder that was rightfully ours,' said Pike.

'We mean to get it back, and you may lay ter that!'

Cherub leaned forward. 'He died afore he could talk to me - but I'll swear he told you something!'

'He told me nothing.'

'And you're a-goin' to tell us, eh? Ain't you?' Pike flourished his hook under the Doctor's nose but the Doctor merely preserved a dignified silence, looking as if the whole discussion was beneath his contempt.

'Let me make him talk, Cap'n,' said Cherub longingly.

Pike leaned back in his high-backed chair. 'Are you really a sawbones, old man?'

'I should prefer you to use the proper term. I am a Doctor.'

'Well, Doctor, you'd best start using your tongue and doing some talking - before I let Cherub have you.'

'Let me show him first, Cap'n,' pleaded Cherub.

Suddenly the long thin knife was in his hand. 'Let me give him a taste of Thomas Tickler here, eh?'

Pike chuckled evilly. ‘He’d be a credit to your profession, Doctor, would our Cherub. Got a touch like an angel’s wing with that blade...’

Cherub stroked the blade down the Doctor’s cheek, like an old-fashioned barber giving a shave. ‘Sharp as a whistle is Thomas Tickler. Ever seen a head with no ears, Doctor?

Or what those Mexican Indians do to a bloke’s eyelids, eh?’

The Doctor didn’t so much as blink. ‘You are a vicious ruffian,’ he said calmly. ‘Captain, kindly call this fellow off me.’

Amazingly, Cherub was actually offended. ‘Don’t you go a-callin’ me names like that, sawbones.’ He turned to Pike.

‘Cap’n, just say the word. Give me but a minute with him, and I’ll have the words spilling out like the blubber from a whale.’

Pike chuckled again. ‘Well, Doctor, what d’you say?

Will you loosen your tongue now... or lose it altogether?’

Despite all their protests of innocence, Polly and Ben had been formally arrested and locked up. Their jail, though they gathered it was to be but a temporary one, was a disused storeroom in the cellars of the inn. To make matters worse their legs were manacled.

Ben was prowling impatiently, and with difficulty, up and down the bare cell-like room. ‘Of all the blooming stupid fixes to be in!’

‘I don’t know,’ said Polly infuriatingly. ‘I think it’s all rather exciting!’

‘Oh you would! Well, I don’t exactly go a bomb on ancient history - and I can’t report back to a seventeenth-century navy!’

‘You’ve got no imagination,’ said Polly loftily. ‘I find it all very interesting.’

‘Oh yeah, fascinating innit? Stuck in jug on a murder charge. Honest who’d have our luck!’

Suddenly Polly screamed, ‘Look!’

There was a small, barred window in the upper half of the door, and a sharp, grimy face was peering at them through the bars. It was the urchin Tom, the innkeeper’s boy. ‘What you a-screaming for?’

‘We’re just happy mate, that’s all,’ said Ben.

‘You’re the boy from the inn, aren’t you?’ asked Polly.

‘What’s your name?’

‘Tom. I’ve been put in charge of you prisoners, I have.

I’ve got the keys. But I ain’t to speak to you ‘cos you’re murderers!’

‘But we didn’t kill anyone,’ protested Ben.

‘Master says only strangers would kill our Churchwarden - and you be strangers!’

‘We’re not the only strangers about, are we?’ argued Ben. ‘What about those geezers who kidnapped the Doctor?’

‘No one’s seen any sign of ‘em.’

‘But they were here,’ said Polly. ‘And the Doctor has disappeared...’

Tom looked worried for a moment. Then his face disappeared from the little window.

‘Daft nit,’ said Ben dismissively. ‘How does he think the Doctor vanished - by magic?’

‘Ben, that’s it!’ said Polly suddenly.

‘What’s what?’

‘This is the seventeenth-century, remember. People still believe in magic and witches.’

‘So? We going to fly out of here on broomsticks?’

‘No, but I think I may have a plan. Quick Ben, give me some of that straw.’ There was a pile of straw in one corner, presumably meant to serve as their bedding. Ben passed Polly a couple of handfuls, then stood looking on in astonishment as she sat cross-legged on the floor and set to work.

It was like being shut up in a cage filled with man-eating tigers, thought the Doctor. The slightest sign of fear and they’d tear him to pieces. So far he had managed to remain unintimidated, in spite of his captors’ increasingly gruesome threats. Now it was time to make a few concessions... ‘If I am to reveal anything of what I know, I demand to be treated with some consideration.’

Since this was the first time that the Doctor had admitted that there was anything to reveal, Pike’s keen interest was aroused. ‘Speak on, Doctor.’

‘Don’t listen to him, Cap’n,’ pleaded Cherub. ‘There’s trickery afoot.’

Ignoring him, the Doctor addressed himself to Pike.

‘Your friend is an uncouth boor, sir - but I can see that *you* are a gentleman. So let us talk together as gentlemen.’

Pike was flattered and intrigued. ‘And what makes you think me a gentleman, eh?’

‘It’s quite obvious - that is, to the perceptive eye. Your dress, your taste make it clear that you are a man who has raised himself to that exalted position, quite unaided...’

‘Unaided? Aye, this is the only help I ever had!’ Pike flourished his oddly-shaped hook in the Doctor’s face.

‘Quite so, quite so,’ said the Doctor hastily.

‘Nevertheless, sir, I can see that you are not a barbarian or a savage. As I say, you are a gentleman.’

Cherub laughed raucously. ‘Cap’n Pike, a gentleman?

Why, he -’ Cherub caught his Captain’s eye and suddenly shut up.

‘You’ve got a funny sense o’ humour sometimes, Cherub,’ said Pike thoughtfully.

‘Sorry, Cap’n.’

Pike returned his attention to the Doctor. ‘And as for you, Doctor, you may talk sweet, but don’t think to toy with me, or you’ll rue the day!’

‘My dear sir, I know very well that you will soon see

through any attempt at flattery. If my words sound sweet, it is only because they are so well deserved.’

Pike nodded, pleased, but still suspicious. ‘To the point, now, Doctor.’

‘My dear Captain, let us talk as men who know the world, with a certain elegance. With dignity, sir...’

‘Talk away, Doctor.’

The Doctor looked round. ‘Then - may I sit?’ Cherub gave Pike an anguished look. ‘’Ware his tongue now, Cap’n.’

Pike flourished his hook. ‘A chair for the Doctor, you swab!’

Sulkily Cherub picked up one of the chairs set around the cabin walls and slammed it down at the table opposite Pike's.

'Thank you, my man,' said the Doctor, and sat down with an air of calm dignity.

Provoked by this condescension, Cherub drew back his arm to strike the Doctor - but suddenly Pike's hook flashed out, caught Cherub by the neckscarf, and dragged his head down to Pike's. 'Now, Cherub, me lad... I'm entertaining a guest, and you ain't being very polite.'

'He's a snake, Cap'n,' whispered Cherub hoarsely.

Pike said softly, 'One more word out o' you Cherub, and I shall slit your gizzard. Right, matey?' He released Cherub, who backed rapidly away. Pike smiled. 'Now, Doctor, let's talk. Like gentlemen - eh?'

'That will be very pleasant.'

'Cherub, some wine for the Doctor. To help him talk more freely like!' Cherub found an unopened bottle and a more or less clean goblet and poured wine for the Doctor and for Pike.

The Doctor sipped his wine appreciatively. 'One more thing, before we go any further...'

'Aye? And what's that, matey?'

'Now that we understand one another - I think you will agree that in return for my information I should receive some small reward.'

Pike winked at Cherub. 'You'll have your reward all right, Doctor.'

Pretending to take the words at face value the Doctor said, 'Excellent - a share, in fact. After all, there's plenty to go round.'

'For them that deserves it, there is.' Pike was getting impatient. 'Aye, well, Doctor?'

The Doctor took another sip of wine. 'To a most pleasant meeting. A fine old Madeira this... Indicative of your general good taste if I may say so.'

But Pike was wearying of flattery. 'Aye, you have said so. Now, tell us what we want to know!'

Suddenly another seaman, a huge negro, burst into the cabin. 'Cap'n, there be a ship's cutter, coming up to leeward.'

Pike was instantly alert. 'Sneaking up on the sly, was she, Jamaica?'

Jamaica shook his head, puzzled. 'Not a bit of it, Cap'n.

Gave us a howl, all friendly like.'

'We got no friends hereabouts,' growled Cherub.

'What do we do, Cap'n?'

'Cherub, my boyo, we invites 'em to step aboard awhile -
all friendly like!'

'And then?'

'If it's a King's man, Cherub, then you can take care of him! And just in case... you, Jamaica, can take the Doctor below. Look after him well now - he's precious!'

The Doctor was bustled away.

By now Polly had completed her task. She had skilfully woven a sort of primitive doll from plaited straw, and explained her plan to Ben.

They were ready to begin. Pollly held up the little mannikin so that it filled the window in the door, and swayed it gently to and fro. She nodded to Ben who yelled,

'Tom! Tom, me old mate. Come quick!'

Tom, who'd been sleeping in a corner nearby, rose rubbing his eyes. 'What's all this noise now?' He stumbled bemusedly over to the cell door, and stared at the doll, which was apparently floating in the window.

Ben crouched down on the other side of the door, and called out in a low, quavery voice. 'Tom... Tom... can you see Paul floating yonder? Help me, Tom. Come here and help me.'

Tom stared at the straw mannikin in amazement. 'What is that thing? What's it a-doing?'

It's Paul, Tom,' moaned Ben. 'Paul's been took over... by the spirit of his master...'

Terrified, Tom shook his head. 'No... no... don't tell me.

Such things isn't meant to be seen by human souls...'

'His master, the Doctor... the bloke that was kidnapped -

he's a warlock!'

'A warlock!' Tom shuddered at the dread word. A warlock, as he knew well, was a male witch, the leader of a coven. 'Heaven save us!'

'No-Heaven save *you*, Tom,' said Ben in a low, doom-laden voice.

'Me? Why me?'

'The Doctor was a wizard, Tom, a warlock no less. And us two are his assistants.'

'You... have you got the power?'

'We have Tom, through our master. Now, do you see Paul there, Tom, swinging like a man on a gallows?'

'It's just a straw doll,' said Tom feebly - but he was clearly terrified.

'It's more than that, Tom,' said Ben solemnly. 'It's got a soul... someone else's soul. It's our Master's doing, Tom.

He's captured someone's soul and imprisoned it in the doll... The soul of someone he blames for us being locked up like this. He's a-going to do that someone in!'

'It ain't me,' squawked Tom. 'I ain't but looking after ye!' 'There's just one hair from your head, Tom,' whispered Ben. 'One hair, inside the doll... Can't you feel yourself swinging, Tom, swinging to and fro...'

Polly swayed the doll from side to side and poor Tom, hypnotised by his own fear, began swaying to and fro in time with it. 'It ain't my fault,' he sobbed. 'It were the Squire gave the order...'

'It's too late, Tom,' moaned Ben. 'It's you there swinging... swinging... In a minute the doll's going to drop, and when it does...'

Polly made the doll dip down suddenly, and Tom gave a howl of fear. 'Oh, sir, save me! I swear it weren't none of my doing!'

'Is that the truth Tom?' asked Ben in an awful voice.

'Oh sir, it is, it is! Save me, save me!'

'Then there is a way...'

'Tell me, sir. I'll do anything...'

'The spell can only work while we are prisoners.

Oncewe're free - then you're safe...'

'But I gave my word to Master Kewper, and the Squire!'

Polly swayed and dipped the doll and gave a low eerie moan.

'Quickly, Tom,' urged Ben. 'Quickly, or your time's up!

Once that doll falls...'

Tom fumbled the keys from his pocket and opened the door. Once inside he began unlocking the manacles, first Polly's and then Ben's. 'Have pity on me,' he babbled.

'Have mercy, have mercy!'

Once she was free, Polly handed him the doll. 'There you are Tom, take this. While you hold it our master will know you for a friend, and you need have no fear.'

Fearfully, Tom took the doll, and Polly and Ben hurried from the cell.

Ben patted the quaking Tom on the back. 'Don't worry, Tom, we'll put in a good word for you. See you sometime, old son - and remember - from now on you're one of us.'

Leaving Tom to contemplate his future as an unwilling wizard's apprentice, Polly and Ben disappeared along the stone-flagged corridor and up the stairs.

6

Kewper's Trade

Polly and Ben emerged into the inn yard, which was fortunately deserted, and stood looking about them.

Suddenly Polly said, 'Ben - where do we go from here?'

He stared at her, realising that he'd been so keen on the idea of escaping that he'd given no thought to where they were escaping to... 'Well, not back to the inn, that's for sure.'

'Trouble is, we haven't the foggiest idea where to look for the Doctor,' said Polly despairingly.

Ben thought for a moment. 'Let's make for the church!'

'That ought to be safe enough. Maybe we could apply for sanctuary.'

'Very funny,' said Ben. 'Still, we might find some sort of clue about what's going on.'

'We might even find out who really killed the Churchwarden,' said Polly.

They hurried off down the lane, quite unaware that they were going from frying pan to fire...

Innkeeper Kewper climbed the rope ladder, swung himself over the side of the pirate ship - and found Cherub's pistol in his ear.

'And who might I have the pleasure of welcoming aboard?'

Kewper looked at the pistol, at Cherub, and at the band of cutthroats surrounding him. 'Jacob Kewper's the name.

Innkeeper. Come to talk business.'

'And what might you know of our business, matey?'

'It's more a matter of putting business your way - or maybe I should say - Trade.'

The Trade meant only one thing along the coast in those days, and Cherub nodded thoughtfully. 'And what business would an honest innkeeper ashore have with poor sailors at sea, eh?'

'Ah now, that's a matter for your Captain's ear. If he'll but listen... it'd be well worth his while - and yours.'

Kewper slipped a golden guinea into Cherub's hand.

Cherub bit the coin to test it, spat on it for luck and stowed it away. 'Worth our while, eh? Come along below, matey...'

He flourished the pistol. 'But no tricks now, Master innkeeper...'

Pike was pouring himself a mug of wine when his visitor was ushered in.

'A visitor who'd talk of business, Cap'n. Worthwhile Trade, so he says.'

'Trade to interest a man such as yourself, Captain.

Profitable business, to our mutual benefit. Brandy, tobacco, silks, and other such merchandise.'

Cherub shook hs head. 'Don't sound honest to me!'

'The only man who'd call the Trade dishonest would be a Revenue Man.' Kewper spat.

'I keep an honest ship, Master innkeeper. And a clean one!'

Kewper scuffed at the offending spittle with his foot.

'No one could doubt it, Captain.'

Pike look thoughtfully at him. ‘I’d have the ears off anyone who thought to land me before a Judge - but I’m always ready to do profitable business with coves as I can trust.’

‘Aye, there’s need for trust,’ said Kewper. ‘When there’s smuggling to be done...’

‘And that’s your business, eh?’ said Pike. ‘I’ll need to know more before I decide to drop anchor here. Talk up!’

‘I’ll give no details afore we shake hands on it,’ said Kewper slyly. ‘But I’ll tell you this. We’re well supported hereabouts.’

‘I’d not wish to prejudice my good name,’ said Pike piously.

‘Would you care to throw in your lot with the local Squire?’ asked Kewper meaningly. ‘Aye, and the Churchwarden too.’ He caught the quick exchange of glances between Pike and Cherub and realised that somehow he had made a mistake...

‘Business with Squire and Churchwarden?’ said Pike.

‘Aye, mebbe. But not with scum like you, matey!’ He nodded to Cherub who slipped behind Kewper and pinned his arms to his sides. Pike gave the innkeeper a rapid search, removed a formidable looking knife, and nodded to Cherub to release him.

‘What trick’s this?’ snarled Kewper.

‘The choicest apples top the barrel, matey,’ said Pike benignly. ‘I’ve a mind to have words with this smuggling Squire of yours.’

‘I speak for him,’ said Kewper angrily. ‘He’ll do no business without me.’

‘Best hope he does, matey,’ said Pike cheerfully, ‘or they’ll be burying another corpse aside Holy Joe Longfoot

- eh, Cherub?’

Cherub tapped the handle of his dagger. ‘True enough, Cap’n.’

Kewper stared at him. ‘You killed our Churchwarden?

Why? What for?’

‘He was killed because he crossed me, that’s what for,’

snarled Pike. ‘No one crosses Captain Pike and lives to tell the tale.’ Pike raised his voice. ‘Jamaica?’

The giant negro appeared in the cabin doorway. ‘Yes, Cap’n?’

‘Fetch the Doctor! Our guests can keep each other company.’

‘Aye, aye, Cap’n.’

Kewper was still staring at Pike in awe. ‘You’re Pike?

But why come here?’

Pike waved his hook under the innkeeper’s nose. ‘Your tongue is near as long as your ears, innkeeper. Take care I don’t have both cut shorter. Cherub, you and me are going ashore!’

Jamaica shoved the Doctor into the cabin, and he and Kewper stared at each other in mutual surprise.

‘Jamaica, you guard ’em,’ ordered Pike. ‘Treat ‘em well and kindly - but if there’s any trouble give them a taste o’

the cat!’ He took a many-thonged whip from the wall and tossed it to the sailor who caught it neatly.

Jamaica grinned. ‘Sure thing, Cap’n.’

Pike picked up his hat, set his wig to rights, and looked at himself in the tarnished cabin mirror. ‘How do I look, Cherub?’

‘Pretty as a picture, Cap’n,’ said Cherub, and they left the cabin. As they stood on deck waiting for the shore boat to be lowered, Cherub said awkwardly, ‘Begging your pardon, Cap’n, there is one thing...’ He pointed to Pike’s hook. ‘Mebbe that ain’t too fitting.’

Pike smiled. ‘Aye, my little pike will hardly be welcome at the Squire’s hall, eh Cherub?’ He held out the hook, and Cherub helped him to wrench it from its socket, leaving an innocuous leather-covered stub.

Pike handed the hook to a nearby cabin-boy. ‘Here you are boy. Take care of this, and guard it with your life!’

Cherub looked over the side to where the longboat was waiting, its crew at the oars. ‘Ready below there?’

‘Aye, ready,’ came the call.

Cherub and Pike climbed down into the waiting boat.

The old church stood silent and deserted when Polly and Ben arrived. They explored the church itself and found nothing, then descended the stairs that led into the crypt.

It was like a huge flagged cellar, the roof supported with great stone pillars, memorial plaques on walls and floor, and a number of free-standing tombs. Polly and Ben looked about them.

‘Well, there ain’t much down here,’ said Ben.

‘Nothing in the rest of the church,’ said Polly. ‘We’ve searched thoroughly enough.’

‘That old bloke must have been knocked off pretty soon after we left.’ Polly shuddered. ‘Maybe the murderer was hiding down here all the time.’

Ben shrugged. ‘Could be. Perhaps the old boy kept his money box down here or something.’

Polly laughed nervously. ‘He looked a bit of a scrooge, didn’t he?’

‘You know,’ said Ben thoughtfully. ‘He was dead scared of something - all the time we were here he was frightened.’

Polly said, ‘As if he was expecting something to happen to him.’

In deliberately spooky tones Ben whispered, ‘Maybe the bloke who bumped him off will come back to the scene of the crime.’

Polly looked at him wide-eyed. Then Ben grinned, and she realised he was teasing her. ‘Oh, don’t be such a fool, Ben!’

‘Maybe you’re right, Duchess. Still early days for old Sherlock Holmes, isn’t it?’

‘Well, I’m not playing your Watson,’ said Polly spiritedly. Then she sighed. ‘I wish I knew where the Doctor was!’

Ben had a sudden idea. ‘I bet he’s tucked up in the TARDIS, all nice and cosy!’

‘Do you think so?’ said Polly wistfully. ‘Let’s go back to the TARDIS then.’

‘That ain’t such a bad idea, Duchess. The beach can’t be too far from here, and maybe the tide’s gone out again by now.’

Suddenly they heard a rumbling, grinding sound. The tomb just ahead of them had started to move... They ducked behind the nearest pillar and watched from their hiding place as the stone oblong of the tomb swivelled to one side to reveal the entrance to a downward-leading flight of steps.

A sinister, cloaked figure, hat pulled down low, came up the steps and moved stealthily past them. As the figure passed by, Ben slipped from hiding and delivered a solid punch behind the ear. The cloaked figure staggered and slumped to the ground.

'Gottim!' said Ben with satisfaction.

'Do you think it's the murderer?' whispered Polly.

'I'm not taking any chances. We'll tie him up first and ask questions after!' Bending over the unconscious man, Ben unfastened his belt and used it to lash the man's hands behind him. By the time he had finished his captive was recovering consciousness and Ben hurried to complete the job before he recovered.

'If this is the murderer,' said Polly, 'then we're in the clear. If I tell the Squire, he'll help us to find the Doctor.'

'I'm not so sure, he looked a bit thick-headed, that Squire - like some Petty Officers I know!'

'We'll never find the Doctor without help, Ben,' Polly pointed out. 'And he's the only one who can work the TARDIS.'

'I see what you mean,' said Ben feelingly. 'I certainly don't fancy getting stuck here for good.'

'You guard the prisoner and I'll go and tell the Squire.'

Ben looked doubtful. 'Hadn't I better go?'

'I'd sooner go myself. I don't really like it down here. I don't suppose I'll be long.'

'All right, Duchess, have it your way. And take care, eh?'

'You bet!'

As Polly hurried away, Ben became aware that his captive was fully conscious and struggling furiously. Ben knelt beside him. 'All right, mate. What have you got to say for yourself?'

His captive was a solidly built, square-jawed man, middle aged, well-dressed and with an air of authority. At the moment he was spluttering with rage. 'Untie me at once, rogue. Don't you know who I am?'

'No,' said Ben bluntly. 'So tell me.'

'I am Josiah Blake - the Revenue man.'

'Prove it!'

'My word is enough...'

'Not to me, mate!'

'Set me free this instant!'

'Sorry, old son, I can't take any chances. You may be who you say, or you may not.'

His captive looked grimly at him. 'And who might you be, sir - tell me that!'

'Just a wandering sailor, mate. I got nabbed for murdering the poor old Churchwarden - which I did not do, as it happens. Now you've popped up on the scene of the crime! I reckon you're a good suspect.'

'I am here in the pursuance of my duty, sir. I am on the trail of smugglers, and I think the passage I've just discovered is one of their secret routes for the movement of contraband.'

'Into the church?' scoffed Ben. 'I suppose the Churchwarden was in with them? Pull the other one, mate!'

‘It is the truth,’ insisted the Revenue man. ‘The Churchwarden is suspected. I had hoped to catch the villain red-handed... But you say he is dead?’

‘That’s right. And you’re stumped. No proof.’

‘I shall find proof a-plenty, never fear. Those steps lead down to a series of caves which lead in turn to the beach.

The Devil’s Stairway ‘tis called.’

‘To the beach, eh?’ said Ben happily. ‘Mister, you’ve just brought me good news.’ He moved to the secret passage.

‘Where are you going?’ demanded the Revenue man.

‘Just for a look-see mate. I won’t be long. You just wait here!’ Ignoring his furiously struggling captive, Ben hurried away.

Captured

Pike and Cherub were waiting, a little uneasily, in the unaccustomed splendour of the Squire's hall.

The Squire's big house stood on the clifftops just outside the village, and their ship's boat had landed them on the beach just below. After a steep climb up the cliff path, and a long trudge up the Squire's gravelled carriage drive, they had given their names to a supercilious footman and were now waiting to be summoned to the presence of the Squire.

Pike looked round enviously. Marble floors, tapestried walls, polished tables bearing fine ornaments, ancestral portraits on the walls... 'Here's style, Cherub, lad,' he whispered reverently. 'Aye, style...'

Cherub was looking round with a professional eye.

'There's stuff here as'd fetch a pretty penny...'

'Belay that,' ordered Pike fiercely. 'We're poor honest sailormen, remember - till we've found out all we need to know about these petty villains. Then we'll take their store of smuggled goods and their money - and find Avery's treasure into the bargain!' He put his finger to his lips as the footman returned and ushered them into the study, where the Squire stood waiting for them.

He came forward to meet them, bulky and impressive in his fine clothes. 'Good day, gentlemen. Will you take wine with me?'

Cherub opened his mouth to accept, and gasped as Pike's elbow took him in the ribs.

'Nay, Squire,' said Pike earnestly. 'We come on business, d'ye see? We was sent by a friend of yourn. Jacob Kewper by name.'

'Kewper, eh?' The Squire raised an eyebrow. Their usual supplier's ship had been captured in an unfortunate encounter with a Revenue cutter, and he knew that Kewper was looking for a replacement. 'I see. Then you gentlemen must be...'

'Merchants, sir,' said Pike hastily. 'Just honest merchants.'

The Squire chuckled. 'Honest merchants, eh, come on a matter of business... That's rich, I swear!'

Pike laughed. 'The very words your friend Kewper used, sir!'

The Squire looked shrewdly at him. 'By the way, where is the fellow? Why is he not dealing with this matter himself?'

'That he is, sir,' said Cherub heartily. 'He's on board our ship, making account of all our merchandise.'

'Ah, such silks, sir,' sighed Pike. 'Such brandy and tobacco. A treasure indeed, Squire!'

The Squire's plump face was alight with greed. 'This is worthy of a toast. I insist you drink with me, gentlemen.'

He poured brandy from a decanter into crystal glasses and passed them round. 'Brandy, silks and tobacco, eh?' He raised his glass. 'To gallant sailors and their fine cargo!'

Pike swigged his brandy. 'To a fair landfall and no tales told!'

'Aye, and so say I,' said Cherub, gripping his glass so fiercely that it shattered in his hand.

‘Forgive him, Squire,’ said Pike. ‘He’s a poor rough sailorman, unused to such fine things.’

‘It is of no consequence,’ said the Squire, wincing a little. He poured Cherub another glass.

‘Now, sir Squire,’ said Pike. ‘To the business in hand.’

‘Indeed yes... But what would Kewper have me do?’

‘He thought you might have time to indicate such details as trouble we poor sailors. Where to land the boats, where ye store the merchandise... And there’s the matter of payment.’

‘As for delivery, ‘tis made to the old church. A likely spot, eh?’

Pike winked at Cherub. ‘Most suitable, sir. And who will receive the goods there?’

The Squire frowned. ‘We must make new arrangements.

It used to be our Churchwarden, but he has recently been most foully murdered.’

‘Shameful,’ said Cherub. ‘And him a most holy-minded man too, no doubt.’

‘And where must we land our boats, sir?’ asked Pike.

Before the Squire could answer the door was flung open and Polly burst in, followed by the footman who was trying in vain to prevent her. ‘Take your hands off me,’ shouted Polly, as the man grabbed hold of her.

The Squire stared at her. ‘By Heaven, it’s one of the strangers who murdered the Churchwarden.’ He waved the footman away. ‘Well done, my good fellow. You may leave the villain to us.’

The footman withdrew, closing the door behind him, and Polly turned excitedly to the Squire. ‘You’ve got it all wrong. We didn’t kill your Churchwarden... but we think we’ve captured the man who did -’ She broke off, as she registered the presence of Cherub. ‘It’s you! You’re the one who kidnapped the Doctor!’

The Doctor meanwhile was still an unwilling guest in Captain Pike’s cabin, sharing it now with the innkeeper, Jacob Kewper. Jamaica stood guard at the door, the cat-of-nine-tails in his hand, knife and pistol in his belt. Since escape for the moment seemed impossible, the Doctor had made the best of things by demanding food. The cabin-boy had brought them bread and cheese and wine, and the Doctor was sharing this simple meal with Kewper.

‘Now tell me, sir,’ he said, when the meal was over, ‘Can you give me any news of my two young friends?’

‘Sad news I fear, sir,’ said Kewper awkwardly.

The Doctor frowned. ‘Are they in trouble?’

‘They were taken up for the murder of our Churchwarden - which I now learn was done by the man called Cherub!’

The Doctor lowered his voice. ‘I must help them...

Somehow we must escape.’

‘Indeed we must, sir,’ whispered Kewper. ‘For their sakes, and for the sake of the whole village.’

‘I don’t understand.’

‘The man Pike is the bloodiest pirate now alive. Few men have encountered that deadly hook and lived to tell of it.’

‘He does seem rather a violent man,’ agreed the Doctor.

‘Why did he kidnap you, sir, if I may ask?’

‘He thinks I hold the secret of a treasure that belonged to a pirate called Avery.’

Kewper’s eyes widened. ‘Avery’s gold? ‘Tis said to be buried ashore. Is it in our village?’

‘Pike believes so, and he is determined to find it. It seems this Churchwarden of yours knew something about it.’

‘If that be so,’ said Kewper fearfully, ‘then Pike will have the treasure, though he will destroy our village in the finding of it!’

‘But the authorities, the men of the village...’ protested the Doctor.

‘They’d be no match for Pike and his crew, sir. ‘Twill be a massacre. Once Pike has laid his plans, sir, we and the village are lost. We must escape and warn them!’

The Doctor looked at the watchful Jamaica. ‘Escape will not be easy while our friend is there...’ He thought hard for a moment. ‘Bear with me, Master Kewper, I think I may have a plan. Tell me, sir, do you play cards?’

Polly was still blurting out her somewhat confused story to an increasingly sceptical audience. When she finished, the Squire snorted in disdain. ‘Of all the trumped up tales - I do not believe one word of it!’

‘Such a sweet young face, and yet so wicked,’ said Cherub sadly.

‘It smells of a trap,’ said Pike.

‘So it does, Cap’n. A dangerous business!’

Polly was still appealing to the Squire. ‘But we really are innocent!’ She pointed to Cherub. ‘And that man there kidnapped the Doctor.’

Pike laughed scornfully. ‘There’s none took ,sick aboard our vessel. Why should we have need of a sawbones?’

‘I don’t know why - but you took him! And it wouldn’t surprise me if you had a hand in killing the Churchwarden too!’

There was a moment’s uneasy silence. Then the Squire said blusteringly, ‘Cease these vile slanders! These gentlemen are honest merchants. I can vouch for them.

You and your friends are strangers, and not to be trusted.’

‘But we haven’t done anything!’

‘A man is dead,’ said the Squire accusingly.

‘He was alive when we left him -’

‘Then you admit you were at the church, and that you spoke to him?’ said the Squire triumphantly. ‘A damning fact indeed!’

‘From the mouths of babes,’ said Pike unctuously.

Cherub shook his head. ‘Such violence from one so young.’

‘Young folk are not what they were in our day, eh, Cherub?’

‘Indeed not, Cap’n. Wicked they are today.’

‘As for this poor fellow you claim to have captured,’ said the Squire, ‘I know not who he may be...’

‘He could be one of your mutual friends, Squire,’ said Pike cunningly. ‘A Revenue man, perhaps, investigating your church?’

The Squire looked worried. ‘Indeed, it could well be so.’

‘Then perhaps it might be as well if we set out for the church,’ suggested Cherub. ‘Fall into the trap a-purpose like?’

Pike nodded. ‘Recapture this villain’s accomplice, and see to our friend from the Revenue.’

‘Aye, that’d be the way of it,’ agreed Cherub.

The two men seemed to be sharing some private joke, but Polly wasn’t amused. ‘Can’t you see, you’re being made a fool of, Squire. These men are your villains!’

Pike gave her a reproachful look. ‘Come now, do we look like a pair of black-hearted villains?’ Polly didn’t bother to reply.

‘Time is short,’ said Cherub. ‘We must prepare.’

‘We’ll ride for the church this instant!’ said the Squire excitedly. ‘And we’ll take our prize with us, eh?’

‘It might be as well to restrain the young fellow, sir,’

suggested Pike. ‘In case of misfortune like.’

‘A happy thought, Captain.’ Rummaging in a corner cupboard, the Squire produced some lengths of thin rope.

‘Here is cord...’

Cherub whipped off his neckerchief. ‘And here is silence!’ Struggling furiously, Polly was bound and gagged.

Ben followed the steps down into a secret tunnel, which led into the caves, and discovered, as he had hoped, that there was a way from the crypt down to the beach, emerging in the cave where they’d landed. Returning the way he had come, he went back to into the crypt, where his captive was still struggling furiously. Ben pushed the tomb closed behind him, concealing the secret door. He grinned cheerfully at his captive. ‘What a turn-up for the books!

You don’t know what a good turn you’ve done me mate!’

‘I do not share your joyous feeling,’ said the man sourly.

‘Free me, I say!’

Ben wasn’t listening. ‘That tunnel leads right down to the beach - right to the spot I’ve been looking for!’

‘What? Are you one of these smuggling rogues after all then?’

‘No, of course not,’ said Ben impatiently. ‘But it comes out just where the TARDIS is!’

‘TARDIS? Is that your ship?’

‘Well, in a way... you wouldn’t understand.’ Ben was talking to himself more than to his prisoner. ‘Thing is, the TARDIS is there, unharmed, all ready for us to get away. If only I can find the others we can all escape!’

Ben turned and ran up the steps from the crypt - and stopped as he saw a burly figure barring his way. It was the Squire, pistol in one hand, sword in the other. ‘Stand fast there I say!’ Dazedly Ben saw other figures behind him.

There was Polly, apparently bound and gagged,and next to her the leader of the gang that had kidnapped the Doctor.

‘Captured again, eh, lad?’ said the Squire triumphantly.

‘This time your tricks won’t help you!’ Raising his sword, he advanced on Ben.

8

The Squire's Plan

Ben backed away, pointing to Cherub. 'That's him! That's the bloke who kidnapped the Doctor!'

There was another man, black-bearded and more finely dressed beside Cherub. His right arm ended in a leather-covered stump. 'You're wrong, lad,' said Captain Pike.

'And you debase the character of my dear friend here.'

Cherub smirked.

Ben turned desperately to the Squire. 'Why won't you believe us?'

'Hold your tongue, boy! You're a vagabond like your friend here, and not to be trusted. Bind him, Master Cherub!'

'Willingly Squire!' Cherub fished a length of spare cord from his pocket, and the Squire covered Ben with his pistol while Cherub lashed his hands behind him.

Ben jerked his head towards Cherub. 'What about him, then? He's a right villain, he is!'

'I know these gentlemen,' said the Squire. 'They are honest merchants both of them.'

From inside the crypt a hoarse voice cried, 'Squire!

Help me!' It was Blake, the Revenue man, still lying there forgotten.

The Squire went over to him. 'Why, it's Mr Blake! What in blazes are you doing here?'

'I should be obliged if you would release me before asking your questions, Squire,' said Blake stiffly.

'Yes, of course. I'll just borrow a knife...' Hurrying across to his two new partners the Squire whispered, 'It is as we thought. This Blake is a Revenue man. There's trouble afoot!'

Cherub produced his knife. 'Cap'n, should I...' He made a swift, throat-slitting gesture with the blade.

The Squire winced and Pike said, 'Nay, Cherub, hold hard. How much does he know, Squire? For certain like?'

'Why, nothing, I suppose...'

'Then make use of him, Squire. Let him take those prisoners off your hands, as is his duty.'

'Aye, that's it,' said the Squire eagerly. 'We'd be rid of the pack of them.'

'Will you release me, sir?' bellowed Blake.

'Cut him free, Cherub,' ordered Pike, and Cherub drew his knife and went over to the bound man. He sliced through the knotted leather belt with the razor-sharp blade, thinking wistfully how much simpler it would be to slip the dagger in the exciseman's ribs, or slit his throat...

The Squire rounded on Ben, who was standing beside Polly, his arms bound. 'To add to your crimes, you have laid hands on one of the King's Revenue men, one Josiah Blake.' The Revenue man in question was struggling to his feet, rubbing his numbed wrists, stamping to put life back into his limbs. As he came over to them,

looking far from happy, the Squire said pompously, ‘Master Blake, these two ruffians murdered Joseph Longfoot, our Churchwarden.

We imprisoned them in the inn, but their cunning was such that they escaped. They must be taken to the jail at Taunton where they will be held fast until their trial.’ The Squire knew full well that he had very little of a case against the two unfortunate vagabonds. But Taunton was several days ride away and his plan, or rather Pike’s plan as it really was, would rid him of an inquisitive Revenue man and two troublesome captives.

It was clear that Josiah Blake didn’t welcome the scheme. ‘With respect, Squire, I am a Revenue man, and not your sheriff, and my duty is the apprehension of the smugglers who infest these parts.’

Cherub gestured to the two young prisoners. ‘Ah, but might these two not be smugglers too. Maybe the Churchwarden stumbled on their evil doings, and so they murdered him.’

Josiah Blake stared thoughtfully at Polly and Ben. Then he said slowly, ‘Aye, they could be smugglers...’

‘Listen!’ yelled Ben. ‘We haven’t killed anyone and we haven’t smuggled anything. Take my word for it, we haven’t done a thing.’ Blake went on looking at him, and it seemed almost as if he was impressed by Ben’s evident sincerity.

Cherub said hurriedly, ‘The lad’s tongue wags overmuch for my liking, Squire. Shall I quieten him?’

‘Agreed.’

Producing a grimy rag from his pocket, Cherub went over to Ben and promptly gagged him.

Blake studied the two bound and gagged prisoners a moment longer and seemed to come to a decision. ‘Very well, Squire. I must thank you for delivering me from these two rogues. I will take them off your hands and deal with them as they deserve.’

‘They are wily knaves,’ warned the Squire. ‘Here, take my pistol.’

Blake took the pistol and waved Polly and Ben towards the steps. ‘Move, you villains. Good-day to you, Squire -

and to you, gentlemen.’ Blake followed his prisoners up the stairs. Pike, the Squire and Cherub watched them go. They looked at each other with broad, triumphant grins...

The Doctor too was still a prisoner, though he was planing to remedy that state of affairs as soon as possible.

Reminding Jamaica of Pike’s orders that they were to be well treated, he had persuaded the man to provide them with a pack of tattered, greasy playing cards. These the Doctor was laying out, face down, on the wine splashed, hook-scarred table in Pike’s cabin. Kewper and Jamaica watched in fascination as the Doctor spread out the cards with the expertise of a professional card-sharp.

He looked up and beamed at them. ‘Now gentlemen, let’s see if this works, shall we? Master Kewper, take any five cards.’ Kewper reached out and selected five cards at random from the semi-circle fanned out on the table. The Doctor took the five cards, swept the rest of the pack aside and spread the five out in a smaller semi-circle, this time face up. There were four picture cards, three jacks, a king and one ace. He studied the cards for a moment, his face grave. ‘Master Kewper are you sure you wish me to go on?’

‘Aye,’ said Kewper gruffly. ‘I’ve no fear of what lies in the cards.’

The Doctor shook his head gloomily. ‘Brave words, my friend.’ He lowered his voice to a thrilling whisper. ‘These cards may hold the key to your life - or death!’

Jamaica laughed uneasily. ‘I can tell your fate without no cards, matey - death!’ But he edged closer to see what was going on.

‘Take care, my good fellow,’ said the Doctor solemnly.

‘Do not mock the mysteries which you do not understand.

‘Come on, old man,’ said Kewper impatiently. ‘Let me know what the future holds. Read the cards!’

‘Very well. But on your head be it!’ The Doctor leaned over the cards. ‘This is all very strange... and disturbing...’

He pointed to the Jack of Clubs. ‘This is your card, good innkeeper!’

‘Nay, I am no knave.’

The Doctor looked shrewdly at him. ‘The cards would have it so, it seems. Now, this Jack of Spades is Master Cherub.’

Jamaica came and leaned over the table, peering at the cards. ‘Aye, there’s his dagger. That’s Cherub right enough.’

The Doctor pointed. ‘After him, comes the King of Spades, the blackest villain of all.’

‘Be it the Cap’n?’ asked Jamaica nervously. ‘See, there’s his beard!’

‘Aye, that must be Pike,’ agreed Kewper. ‘But who is this Jack of Diamonds? What’s he?’

‘I’ve no idea, my friend,’ said the Doctor. ‘But he, whoever he is, will triumph in the end. And for one of the others in the circle the last card of all is waiting.’ He tapped the Ace of Spades. ‘Death!’

Kewper gave him a worried look. ‘’Tis madness - all madness...’

‘Call it that if you will,’ said the Doctor placidly, collecting up and stacking the cards with that same rippling ease. ‘They are only cards - but they can tell the truth about a man - any man.’

‘Like me?’ asked Jamaica fascinated. ‘Will you read my fortune, Doctor?’

‘You are not afraid?’

‘No... Jamaica ain’t afraid.’

‘Then shuffle the cards to know your fate my friend,’

said the Doctor impressively. He held out the pack of cards, Jamaica reached out to take them - and somehow the cards slipped from the Doctor’s hands, cascading to the floor. Instinctively Jamaica bent to pick them up... The Doctor stepped back and beckoned to Kewper, who leaped forwards and clubbed the sailor down with a savage blow behind the ear.

As Jamaica fell, the Doctor said, ‘Well done innkeeper.

We must bind and gag him, quickly now!’ Using shirts and cravats from Pike’s wardrobe they bound and gagged the unfortunate Jamaica and rolled him onto the daybed, covering him with a grimy counterpane.

‘A guileful trick, Doctor,’ said Kewper appreciatively. ‘It was but trickery, all that you said? A rigmarole to bedazzle this pirate?’

The Doctor smiled enigmatically. ‘Perhaps... We have no time for idle speculation, my man. We must somehow slip away from this ship, and quickly if I am to find and help my young friends.’

‘The best way to do that would be to seek the aid of the Squire,’ said Kewper slyly.

‘Did you not say he was the one who arrested them, and now holds them prisoner?’

‘He is the Magistrate, and he saw it as his duty. When we inform him of the truth, he will no doubt release them.’

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor thoughtfully. ‘No doubt it would be as well to have the law on our side.’

‘Indeed it is,’ agreed Kewper piously. ‘In these black times, honesty will surely be rewarded.’ In fact Kewper neither knew nor cared whether the Squire would release his prisoners. He just wanted to get back in contact with him as soon as possible, and had no scruples in using the Doctor to achieve his aims.

The Doctor looked down at Jamaica’s huddled form.

‘Farewell, my friend, I hope your fortune turns out well.’

They moved cautiously out onto the deck, which appeared deserted. Probably no proper watch was kept on the pirate ship while it was at anchor, thought the Doctor.

In the absence of the captain and first mate the crew were no doubt either sleeping or boozing... As if to confirm his theory, a snatch of drunken song and a burst of raucous laughter floated along from somewhere below decks.

Kewper was already calling him to the side of the ship.

‘This way, Doctor. My boat’s still tied up where I left her.

We can cast off and be away afore these drunken swabs know we’re free!’ He helped the Doctor to climb over the side.

The Squire came out into the churchyard, followed by Cherub and Pike. He was still preening himself on his own brilliance - an illusion which the two pirates were encouraging for purposes of their own.

Flattery was cheap, and you could still slit the man’s throat afterwards. At least he’d die happy.

‘I feel well rid of those two young blackguards,’ the Squire was saying.

‘Such guile and wisdom, eh Cherub?’ Pike winked at his henchman. ‘A master of men, no less.’

Cherub was quick to agree. ‘Indeed, Cap’n. The kid glove on the iron hand.’

Pike laid on the flattery with a shovel. ‘And to get rid of the Revenue man so easily at the same time. If only I had your quickness of mind, Squire.’

Cherub rubbed his hands. ‘Such subtle ways gladden the soul!’

The Squire positively glowed. ‘Well, if one has the brains, y’know tis a pity not to use ‘em.’

Pike shook his head admiringly. ‘Rid of the law and of those villains at one and the same time! Indeed, Squire, I find my confidence in you grows more and more.’

‘Aye,’ said Cherub, ‘all fears be now dispelled. With you to lead us, Squire, how can we fail?’

‘Indeed we cannot!’ The Squire gave them a cunning look. ‘I could surprise you further!’

Pike looked properly impressed. ‘How so, sir Squire?’

‘Like this!’ The Squire went over to the big tomb in the middle of the churchyard. He pressed a particular piece of moulding, shoved hard and the whole top of the tomb

slid back like the lid of an old-fashioned pencil box. Pike and Cherub leaned over to peer inside. The tomb was like an enormous stone box, and it was filled to the brim with kegs of brandy, bales of silk, and canvas-swathed bundles of tobacco.

The Squire beamed. 'The grave has its secrets, eh gentlemen?'

Pike's eyes were shining with greed. 'Few graves hold secrets as worldly as these, I think.'

The Squire waved his hand airily. 'Tobacco, silks, brandy - this is our immediate cache, you understand?'

Pike understood very well. From here the bundles would be scattered about the countryside, moved by night on trains of packhorses, to elude the eyes of the Revenue men.

'Aye, 'tis clear enough, Squire. But where do we stow our merchandise?'

'Why upon the beach, where you will be met.'

'And why not here, Squire?' asked Cherub menacingly.

Vain as he was, the Squire wasn't a complete fool. 'The land is our domain, as the sea is yours. Our methods, our routes and hiding-places must remain our own. But I can tell you this - this tomb will be empty again, by tomorrow's tide!'

Pike nodded, apparently satisfied. 'I'm sure you know best, Squire.' Neither Pike nor Cherub had any intention of actually doing any smuggling. Indeed, as pirates, they thought the Trade beneath them. Their simple plan was to discover the whereabouts of his main cache of smuggled goods, and of the money he must have made from the immensely profitable trade. That done, they would steal the lot and be on their way. To Pike the Squire was simply a sort of bonus to go with Avery's treasure - that or a consolation prize, in case the treasure was never found.

However, Pike was determined that the treasure would be found - if he had to destroy the village and murder every single inhabitant in the process.

Meanwhile he had to go through the motions of his smuggler's role. 'Tomorrow night, then, we land our merchandise. And the hour agreed?'

'A small beacon will be lit on the shore, at two hours after midnight. Make for the beacon, and there you will be met.'

'And if there is danger? What then?'

'A second beacon will be lit, close to the first.'

'Why, we are suited then,' said Pike cheerily. 'Except of course, as to the matter of payment. Is the money at hand?'

'Never fear,' said the Squire. 'But such matters are best settled over good food and good wine. What do you say, gentlemen, will you come home and dine with me?'

Pike and Cherub protested that they would be honoured. Followed by his two unreliable allies, the Squire made for the three horses, tethered by the church gate.

Tired and footsore Polly and Ben limped into the stable yard of the inn; Josiah Blake, the Revenue man, followed close behind them. The two young people collapsed exhausted onto bales of straw. To their amazement Blake removed their gags, then took out a big clasp-knife and began severing their bonds.

'What are you doing?' croaked Polly.

'Is it not obvious?'

'Yeah - but why?' demanded Ben. 'Whose side are you on anyway, mate?'

'Let us say that even though I do not know you, I find it easier to have faith in you than in the Squire and his friends.'

‘Thank goodness someone believes us,’ said Polly with relief.
Ben nodded. ‘Yeah, I was beginning to get worried.’
‘I have not said I trust you completely,’ warned Blake.
‘But you don’t trust the Squire at all, do you?’ said Polly shrewdly. ‘Why not?’
‘Because I believe him to be the leader of the entire smuggling ring.’

9

Pike's Revenge

There was a moment of astonished silence, as Polly and Ben absorbed what Blake had said. Perhaps it wasn't so unbelievable after all, thought Polly. It helped to explain much of the Squire's strange behaviour, his fear and suspicion of strangers.

Ben felt he had scores to settle with the Squire. 'Listen, if we can help you nobble him - capture him, I mean...'

Blake shook his head. 'No, boy, this is a job for armed men, and plenty of them.'

'Armed men?' exclaimed Polly. 'Are you expecting real trouble then?'

'Did you not note those two cutthroats with the Squire, and all three as thick as thieves? Seamen, smugglers I'll be bound. In a night or two they'll be landing their cargo on the beach, with the Squire and his men waiting to meet them.'

Ben nodded eagerly. 'And that's when you plan to nab the lot of them?'

'If I can persuade the authorities to send enough armed men, Revenue men or Militia maybe... But the Squire has powerful friends - as yet I have no real proof...'

'If those people with the Squire are only smugglers,' said Polly slowly, 'what did they want with the Doctor?'

'Who knows,' said Ben. 'You know the Doctor, he's got a funny way of landing himself right in it - and us with him!'

'Your Master, the Doctor,' said Blake, 'he is a learned man, I take it?'

'Not half!' said Ben simply. 'Nothing wrong with that, is there?'

Blake frowned. 'A soldier might be more use to us at this point.'

'Don't underestimate the power of brains,' said Polly.

'The Doctor may not be a soldier, but he's quite crafty enough to think his way out of trouble. At least, that's what he did back in London...'

'Indeed - and why not here?' said a familiar voice. Tired and dusty but as indomitable as ever, the Doctor strode into the stable yard.

Polly ran up to him, and hugged him, showering him with questions. 'Doctor, what happened? Where did they take you? How did you escape?'

'My dear child, control yourself...' Gently disengaging himself the Doctor gave a brief account of his adventures.

'... and so finally I escaped - in the company of Mr Kewper.'

'But he's in with the Squire,' protested Ben.

'Is he?' said the Doctor vaguely, not realising the extent of the Squire's villainy. 'Anyway, he's with me now. He just popped into the inn to see how things were.' The Doctor looked at Blake. 'I don't think I have the pleasure of knowing this gentleman?'

'This is Mr Blake, the Revenue man,' said Ben. Helped and interrupted by Polly he gave the Doctor a brief account of their recent adventures.

'The boy is right, Doctor,' said Blake when Ben had finished. 'Kewper is believed to be deeply involved with the smugglers - and he knows me well!'

The Doctor raised his voice warningly, 'Ah, there you are, Kewper, my good fellow!' Blake stepped back into the shadows.

Kewper looked in some surprise at Polly and Ben.

'You're free then? We were coming to release you. We know now who killed the Churchwarden.

‘Who was it?’ asked Polly.

‘A villain they call Cherub.’

Blake stepped out of the shadows. ‘Who is now engaged in yet more villainy with your friend, the Squire.’

Kewper was clearly taken aback. ‘Not so, Master Blake,’

he protested feebly.

‘It’s true,’ said Polly triumphantly. ‘Mr Blake knows all about it. He knows we’re innocent, and that it’s you and the Squire who are up to something!’

Kewper’s face twisted with rage, and suddenly Polly realised that she’d given the game away. Kewper swung round on the Doctor. ‘So you’ve led me into a trap, have you, old man? Had I known you were a Revenuers spy -’

He moved threateningly towards the Doctor.

‘Hold, Master Kewper!’ snapped Blake.

Suddenly Kewper produced a pistol from beneath his cloak and the Doctor realised he must have fetched it from the inn.

‘Stand back!’ snarled Kewper, and everybody stood very still. For a moment the pistol was trained on the Doctor.

‘You helped me escape, Doctor,’ said Kewper at last. ‘But for that I’d slay you now. The next time we meet - look not for pity then!’ A saddled horse, belonging presumably to the landlord of the inn, was tethered in the yard. Kewper swung himself on to its back and galloped away. Blake ran out into the yard after him. Kewper turned in his saddle, a shot rang out, and Blake ducked back into cover. They all listened helplessly as the hoofbeats of Kewper’s horse faded away into the distance.

‘Escaped!’ bellowed Pike. With the terrible hook back in place he towered over the terrified Jamaica, now released from his bonds, who was kneeling at his feet begging for mercy.

‘They tricked me. Cap’n! I swear it weren’t no fault of mine...’

‘You black-hearted swab,’ snarled Pike. ‘I’ll tear out your liver and feed it to the sharks, ye sea-slime!’

‘The old man cast a spell on me, Cap’n, I swear it!’

Pike’s hook was inches from Jamaica’s throat. ‘I’ll cast a spell on ye, my pretty death’s-head, a spell that’ll run from ear to ear!’

‘It was the black arts, Cap’n. Witchcraft! Spare me!’

‘Spare ye? I’ll keel-haul ye! Where could they be a-making for?’

‘I know that,’ said Jamaica eagerly. ‘I heard ’em talking...’

‘Then speak, boyo, while ye’ve still got the breath!’

‘They said somethin’ about going to see the Squire.

They said he was the Law...’

Pike smiled evilly. ‘Aye, if he’d the will he could call in the Militia - but somehow I doubts as how he will... but if the Doctor goes to the Authorities, the Squire’ll be quick enough to turn against us.’

His rage seemed to have lessened now, and Jamaica scrambled to his feet. ‘Do you think they might try to trap us, Cap’n?’

‘They might, lad. They expect us tomorrow, at two...’

Desperately trying to regain his Captain’s favour Jamaica said cunningly. ‘Then we must surprise ’em, Cap’n. We go tonight at one!’

Pike gave his evil smile again, and suddenly Jamaica felt a chill of fear. ‘You’d never make a skipper, Jamaica, lad, you’re short of guile. Do you think they trust us? Any dark night, they’ll be on the watch for us, but we’ll scupper ‘em and land by day. Some will go direct to the church and loot the smugglers’ store, while me and Cherub will search for Avery’s gold...

Jamaica tried to smile. ‘Aye and there’ll be fine plunder, eh, Cap’n? The inn, the village, and the Squire’s fine Hall...’

‘Aye, boyo, it’ll be a merry night,’ said Pike softly. ‘But not for you!’

Jamaica’s eyes widened with fear. ‘No, Cap’n...’

The hook flashed out, there was a choking gurgle, and Jamaica crashed to the ground, twitched for a moment and then lay still. Pike leaned forward and wiped his hook on the dead man’s shirt. ‘Fare thee well, Jamaica!’ He moved to the cabin door and bellowed, ‘Cherub!’ For once Cherub failed to appear at his Captain’s call. ‘Cherub! Where in the fires of hell are ye?’

Instead a skinny little pirate called Crow appeared. He stopped in the doorway, reacting in horror to the sight of Jamaica’s body. He turned to run, but Pike’s hook flashed out and caught him by his neckcloth. ‘Where’s Cherub, eh?

Go and fetch the swab!’ He thrust the man away.

Minutes later the man was back. ‘Cherub ain’t aboard, Cap’n! I’ve searched from stem to stern and no one’s seen him.’

‘But we came back from dining with the Squire together,’ muttered Pike. ‘Not aboard? Then where in Satan’s name is he?’

The Doctor, Polly, Ben and Blake the Revenue man were in conference in the inn. Blake had persuaded a sullen barmaid to serve them bread and cheese and beer, telling her only that her master, Kewper, had been called away on urgent business. Blake and the Doctor, who seemed to have hit it off, were comparing notes, while Polly and Ben enjoyed the food and drink, the fire, and the relative peace and quiet.

‘... so we believe that Captain Pike intends to ransack the old church, and the village as well if need be, in an attempt to find Avery’s hidden treasure.’

Blake frowned. ‘Indeed? Strange news this, Doctor.

When?’

‘I can’t say for sure - but soon. Tomorrow night, perhaps, or even tonight. The Squire’s Hall will be pillaged and burnt, the whole village destroyed, the villagers slaughtered...’

Polly was horrified. ‘Why? What for?’

‘It is Pike’s way,’ said Blake bluntly. ‘Death and destruction are his trade.’

‘Now that Kewper has escaped,’ said the Doctor slowly,

‘the smugglers will have some prior knowledge of Pike’s intentions.’

Ben said, ‘And they’ll be after the treasure too, you can bet on it!’

Blake jumped up. ‘They’ll be at each other’s throats...

Which may give me the chance to bring in the militia.’

‘Why don’t you just let them fight it out?’ suggested Ben.

‘Such men, when their blood is up can destroy all before them,’ said Blake grimly. ‘Innocent and guilty alike. There could be a massacre.’

‘We must prevent that if we can,’ said the Doctor quietly. ‘You had better be on your away, Mr Blake.’

Blake ran to the door shouting, ‘Stableboy? Stableboy, where are you?’

Tom appeared in the doorway, saw the Doctor and then froze as if hypnotised. The Doctor looked up at him and Tom vanished as quickly as he had come. Ben grinned.

Clearly, Tom still thought the Doctor was a warlock.

Blake bellowed after him. 'Fetch my horse, boy - and quickly.' He turned in the doorway. 'Goodbye, all of you. I pray to God I may return in time.'

As Blake hurried away, Ben turned to the Doctor. 'We can leave this place as soon as we like. There's a secret passage in the crypt of the church. It leads into that same cave where we left the TARDIS. We can get there whenever we like, whatever the tide's doing.'

'Thank goodness for that,' said Polly. 'Isn't that wonderful Doctor?' But the Doctor's face was grave.

'What's the matter, Doc?' asked Ben.

'I'm afraid I can't leave here. Not yet. It may be difficult for you to understand, but I feel a - moral obligation.'

'Obligation to what, Doc? We've got no ties here!'

'I have become involved in the affairs of this village,'

said the Doctor gently. 'Who knows, my interference may even have brought about the threat of destruction. I feel I must at least try to ward off the danger, until Mr Blake returns.'

'You heard what Blake said,' protested Ben. 'Pike's mob are a right bunch of yobbos, and I don't suppose the smugglers are much better. What can we do against that lot?'

Polly agreed. 'We wouldn't stand a chance, Doctor.'

The Doctor gave her one of his infuriatingly superior smiles. 'Wouldn't we, my dear? You forget I've already met Pike - and escaped from him. What's more I have something he doesn't. A clue to the treasure!'

Polly stared at him. 'So the old Churchwarden did tell you something?'

Ben gave the Doctor a suspicious look. 'Come on Doctor, what are you up to?'

'If we could find that treasure before anyone else, we could use it to bargain for the safety of the village.'

'I wouldn't fancy trying to do a deal with Pike,' said Ben frankly. 'I can't see him spending much time talking it over.'

'Possibly he might spend enough time to allow Mr Blake to get here,' said the Doctor quietly. 'Enough time to save the people of this village.'

'He's right, Ben,' said Polly. 'We've got to do all we can.

It'd be cruel not to.'

'You're a right couple of nutcases,' grumbled Ben. 'All right, I'll try anything once.'

'Well said, my boy,' said the Doctor, answering the spirit of Ben's reply rather than his actual words. 'Now, we must get off to the church and hope our luck holds out:'

He looked up and saw that Tom was standing in the doorway staring unwinkingly at him. As the Doctor rose, Tom turned and fled back to the shelter of his stables.

'Bye, Tom,' called Polly.

'Extraordinary infant,' said the Doctor. 'Come along, you two, we've got to get off to the church.'

From the stables Tom watched them disappear into the distance, wondering why they hadn't used their broomsticks. With a sigh of relief he turned away - and found himself facing Cherub, who stood smiling at him.

'They've gone, Tom lad,' said Cherub gently. 'Be a pal and tell us where they've gone...' Light glinted on the blade of the knife in Cherub's hand.

10

Treasure Hunt

Kewper rode up the Squire's drive at a gallop, scattering gravel beneath his horses hooves. Flinging the reins to an astonished footman, he burst into the Squire's study unannounced and poured out his story. The Squire's normally purple complexion was a sickly white by the time Kewper had finished his tale.

'That merchant captain - Pike? I can scarce believe it.

He was so humble, so *respectful*...'

'I tell you he's *Pike* - the bloodiest pirate still afloat.'

'The man has tricked me...'

'At least you live to tell of it,' said Kewper grimly.

The Squire shuddered at his narrow escape. 'But I have delivered all our plans into their hands,' he wailed. 'What can we do?'

'We must play them at their own game - only more cunningly. If we keep our minds clear, we need not sink, indeed we may even profit!'

'How, profit?'

'Pike only talked to you to spy out the land. He'd not be averse to picking up a little extra loot - but his real interest here lies in a far greater prize. Avery's Treasure!'

'Treasure?' asked the Squire blankly. 'What treasure?'

'Avery's gold - or a good part of it at least.'

'In these parts?'

'It seems that Longfoot, our late Churchwarden was, at some time, part of that murderous band that was Avery's crew. They tracked him to his lair because they believe him to have knowledge of the treasure's hiding place. They firmly believe that the gold is hidden somewhere beneath our Church.'

'Avery's gold,' said the Squire wonderingly.

'Aye, 'tis a dream to conjure with, is it not?'

'Indeed! And hidden within our grasp.'

'Pike and his men will commit any villainy for that gold. So we must act first.'

'I want no bloodshed,' said the Squire quaveringly.

'Then we must use guile. They will go to the church soon, of that I am sure. So we must be the sooner!'

The Squire rubbed his hands. 'Aye, that's it.

Forestall the villains and leave them nothing!'

'We must set a trap,' said Kewper thoughtfully. 'If we find the gold then we are made men - but gold or no gold we must crush the pirates or we shall be dead men.'

'I have told them of the place on the shore where they must land and shown them the tomb that hides some of our store,' said the Squire apologetically.

But Kewper seemed pleased. 'Then we can guess the path they will take tonight. Twenty well-hidden muskets and they are done for!'

The Squire chuckled. 'And there's a triumph for Law and Order, eh? Smugglers destroyed! First we must find Avery's gold.' He raised his voice. 'My horse, Birch!'

Then he turned back to Kewper. 'Have we no clue as to where this treasure lies?'

Kewper shrugged. 'Pike thought that this Doctor had some clue to the secret...'

The Squire led the way outside, where two saddled horses were waiting. 'Well, we must search the harder, eh?'

‘Alone?’ asked Kewper. ‘Just we two?’

‘To be sure... we take none other into this but our two selves.’

The Squire swung himself into his saddle. ‘Avery’s gold!

We’ll both be rich men. No need to smuggle brandy then, eh?’

‘I should like to see their faces when they find the treasure gone,’ said Kewper as he climbed into his saddle.

His face hardened. ‘But sooner than that, I should like to see them dead!’ The two allies rode away.

The Doctor led his companions into the churchyard, which looked eerie in the dull afternoon light.

Polly looked round. ‘Well, where do we start?’

‘What did the Churchwarden tell you, Doc?’

The Doctor frowned. ‘Some bit of doggerel verse:

“This is Deadman’s secret key

Kingwood, Smallbeer and Gurney”

‘What does it mean?’ asked Ben.

‘For Heaven’s sake, boy, it’s some kind of code. I’m trying to work it out!’

‘Sorry!’

Polly drew him aside. ‘Better leave him to it. He’ll tell us when he’s getting anywhere.’

Ben looked round. ‘Fancy lot of tombstones!’

‘Let’s see if we can find the oldest...’

Ben wandered over to a moss-covered stone. ‘Take a butchers at this one, then, 1593!’

‘That’s not so old - not to them. This isn’t the twentieth-century remember, we’re in sixteen hundred and something.’

‘All right, so I forgot!’ It was strange, thought Ben, how quickly you got used to being around hundreds of years before you’d been born.

‘Here’s a good one,’ said Ben suddenly. He read it out:

‘Henry Hawksworth he did die

Of drinking too much small beer

When he was dry.’

‘Some of these old names are wonderful,’ said Polly.

‘How about this one then - Lucinda Marltree!’

Suddenly the Doctor swung round. ‘What did you say?’

‘Lucinda Maltree.’

‘No, before that... The names! Of course, that’s it. The names!’

‘What is?’ asked Polly.

‘Deadman’s secret key. It’s the answer to the puzzle.

The names of dead people - on tombstones.’

Ben looked round. ‘Here, in the graveyard?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘No, not here. Too public, too exposed.’

‘The crypt!’ said Polly. ‘All those burial plaques and flagstones in the crypt!’

‘My dear girl, that’s it exactly,’ said the Doctor. ‘You’re quite inspired - come along now, quickly!’ He led them into the church and down the stairs into the crypt.

‘Now what are we looking for?’ asked Ben.

Polly said, ‘What was that rhyme again Doctor?’ The Doctor recited it:

‘This is Deadman’s secret key

Ringwood, Smallbeer and Gurney'

'That's it,' said Ben exactly. 'Dead man's secret, names on tombstones. Now what?'

'We must find the names first, my boy,' said the Doctor.

'That is the first step!'

'Don't you want to see the secret tunnel I found?'

'Oh, very well,' said the Doctor ungraciously. 'Where is it?'

Ben found the right tomb and heaved it to one side, revealing the steps.

'Yes, yes, most ingenious,' said the Doctor absently.

'Now close it, will you?'

'OK, you're the skipper.' Resignedly, Ben shoved the tomb back in place.

Polly meanwhile had been studying memorial flagstones set into the floor. 'Ringwood. I've found Ringwood!'

'Well done, my dear. Now keep looking. We must find the others quickly!'

Ben joined in the search. After a moment he called,

'Here's Gurney! That's two of 'em.'

'Only one more to go,' said Polly excitedly.

Ben wandered round the crypt, eyes to the ground.

'Come on Smallbeer, me old mate. Where are you...'

Kewper and the Squire moved quietly into the church.

'If it's buried, this treasure,' said the Squire. 'The most likely place to start would be the crypt.'

'And the door to the crypt stands open,' said Kewper.

'Strange indeed!'

'Are we forestalled?'

'Perhaps... But there were no horses outside, and there are no guards on watch here. Pike would be more watchful, I think, and Blake better equipped.'

The Squire said, 'Could it be that pestiferous Doctor?'

'If it is, Providence is on our side,' said Kewper. 'He holds the secret of the treasure, of that I am sure.'

The Squire moved cautiously towards the steps. 'Then let us find him out...'

In the crypt, the Doctor and his companions had come to a dead end. 'Well, we've found our three names,' said the Doctor. 'Ringwood, Smallbeer and Gurney.'

'I'm blowed if I see how it helps, though,' said Ben.

'Nor me,' said Polly.

'As a matter of fact, I did have a theory,' said the Doctor.

'It would be a great help if there were four names, not just three!'

'Need another dead man's name do you?' said Ben gloomily.

'That's it!' said the Doctor suddenly. 'Of course, that's it!' 'What is it, Doctor?' said Polly. 'Tell us!'

'Yes, tell us, Doctor,' said a harsh voice from the top of the steps. They looked up and saw Kewper and the Squire coming down towards them. Both had pistols in their hands.

'What are you doing here?' asked the Doctor.

'Why, the same as you,' said Kewper. 'Seeking Avery's treasure.'

The Doctor turned to the Squire. 'And who are you, sir?'

'I am Squire Edwards - the local magistrate, sir.'

Kewper snarled, ‘Let us waste no more words on formal greetings. The secret of the treasure, old man!’

‘For what purpose?’

‘Why, to forestall that villain Pike,’ said the Squire.

‘And to...’ His voice trailed off.

‘To line your own pockets,’ completed Ben. ‘A fine magistrate you are.’

‘Hold your tongue boy,’ growled Kewper. ‘Riches are for those who can take them.’

The Doctor looked disapprovingly at him. ‘I hope you don’t expect me to help you.’

‘You’ll help us, old man,’ Kewper’s pistol swung round to cover Polly. ‘Or watch these young sprigs die, one by one.’

The Squire was horrified. ‘Nay, surely not, Kewper.’

‘Be not lily-livered now, Squire. Avery’s gold is not for weaklings.’

‘I will not kill children in cold blood, man!’

‘He knows where the gold is hidden,’ said Kewper furiously. ‘He must be made to speak!’

‘Not by such unholy means as this,’ said the Squire firmly. ‘Let us tie them up and we will make our search alone.’

Kewper leaned closer to the Squire. ‘We waste precious time. No one need be harmed,’ he whispered. ‘The threat alone will make him talk.’

‘Not even the threat will I countenance,’ said the Squire with unexpected firmness. Let us remember we are gentlemen.’

‘Gentlemen!’ sneered Kewper. ‘Was Avery’s gold first won by gentlemen? Is it to be got now by kindness?’

‘I will have my way, sir,’ said the Squire angrily.

‘Do not cross me in this,’ threatened Kewper.

‘Rogue!’ said the Squire furiously. ‘I can have thee hanged if I choose!’

‘Do you threaten me with the rope, Squire? I promise you shall stand beside me on the gallows.’

Someone moved in the shadows at the top of the stairs.

‘You grow over bold, sir!’ shouted the Squire.

Kewper was too angry to watch his speech. ‘Aye, the rope will leave her mark on your fine skin, Squire!’

‘’Tis a mark you’ll never see, friend Kewper,’ said a voice from the top of the stairs. Something silvery flashed across the gloom of the crypt. Kewper clutched at his throat and fell choking to the ground.

Polly screamed...

11

Cherub's Move

They looked up to see Cherub at the top of the stairs, a pistol in his hand. He was taking aim at the Squire.

'Look out!' shouted the Doctor.

The warning came almost too late, though it probably saved the Squire's life. He tried to leap aside, the pistol roared - and the Squire staggered back, clutching at a wounded shoulder. He fell back against a pillar, then slid slowly down it to the ground. Cherub tossed the pistol aside and pulled another from his belt. With catlike speed he bounded down the steps, plucked his dagger from Kewper's body, wiped it quickly on Kewper's coat and then leaped back, covering the Doctor and his companions with pistol and knife.

'Anyone else want a free trip to Davy Jones' locker?'

'You had us all at your mercy,' said the Doctor sternly. 'There was no need to kill Kewper and shoot the Squire.'

'Ah, but five to one is poor odds, sawbones,' argued Cherub reasonably. 'I fancied betterin' 'em a little.'

'What do you want of us?'

'Why, the secret of course. The secret of where Avery's gold lies hid.'

'And if I don't choose to tell you?'

'Do you really fancy seeing these friends of yours go to meet their maker so young, sawbones?' Cherub was quite capable of carrying out his threat, the Doctor realised.

After all, he had just killed one man and tried to kill another simply as a kind of general precaution.

Nevertheless the Doctor said, 'I refuse to bargain with such as you, sir. Where is your Captain?'

Cherub chuckled admiringly. 'Fancy twisting him round to your way of thinking, again, do you? There's only one skipper here today, matey - me!'

'You're alone then?' said Ben quickly.

Cherub raised his pistol. 'Not a bit of it! One false move and I'll split ye in two!'

'Leave this to me, Ben,' said the Doctor.

'That's right, lad,' said Cherub. 'Let the old feller do the talking, 'cos he knows the answers!'

'What about the Squire?' said Polly. 'He's badly wounded. He needs help.'

'Let the blockhead rot!'

'At least let me give him some water!' Polly pointed towards a pannikin of water on a nearby table.

'Well, what's the cost of a moment's kindness,' said Cherub unexpectedly. 'Take the water to him if you must.'

Polly moved to get the pannikin. To do this she had to pass in front of Cherub. Suddenly he sprang forward and grabbed her from behind, holding his pistol to her head.

'That's better. Now, talk, sawbones, or your young friend dies! Where's the treasure hid?'

‘The Churchwarden did tell me something,’ admitted the Doctor. ‘But it was a kind of riddle, and to be honest it has me baffled.’

‘What’s the puzzle?’ asked Cherub suspiciously.

The Doctor recited the rhyme:

“This is Deadman’s secret key

Ringwood, Smallbeer and Gurney”

I am baffled by the meanings of these names.’

‘I know them names,’ said Cherub excitedly. ‘Jack Ringwood had a wooden leg, but he was the finest master gunner who never served his King!’

‘And Smallbeer?’

‘Dan’l Smallbeer – ah, there was a man. Built like a killer whale, and fought like one with a pint o’ rum inside him. Old Zeb Gurney, he was the ship’s chandler. Sewed many a poor dead sailor into a sailcloth nightgown. Mighty good men, all four of ‘em.’

‘Four?’

‘Four. Tim Deadman was Avery’s galley boy... So what else did Holy Joe tell you, sawbones?’

‘Nothing more, I’m afraid.’

‘Nothing?’ Cherub raised his pistol to Polly’s head again.

‘Don’t be so hasty. I need your help to work out the puzzle.’

‘Four names,’ said Cherub bitterly. ‘Four names to lead me to Avery’s gold.’

‘And Avery’s curse,’ croaked a voice from the ground.

The Squire had recovered a little and was propped up on one elbow. ‘Avery’s curse, man, what of that?’

‘Avery’s curse? You may feed it to the sharks!’

‘It is a curse men fear,’ said the Squire feebly. ‘He died most horribly, remember.’

‘Aye,’ said Cherub slowly. ‘His brain rotten with rum and madness on his tongue...’

‘You know, they say he made a bargain with the devil,’

the Squire went on. ‘His soul for all the souls who would come after, seeking and finding his cursed treasure, but getting no good of it but their deaths.’

Much as he tried to hide it, it was clear that Cherub was afraid. ‘If you believe such things, why did you desire the gold, sir Squire?’

‘Because I was a fool... and you see what it has brought me. I lie here a-dying, and so shall you!’

On the beach, Pike and his pirate crew were dragging their long boats above the tide line. Then, Pike, a cutlass in his good hand, led the little band of armed men up the steep path to the clifftop. Then they made their way silently to the churchyard.

Pike found the tomb the Squire had shown them and shoved back the lid. He beckoned one of the pirates forward. ‘There’s the first of the loot, Gaptooth. Take it down to the beach and pile it in the boats. We’ll go on my signal.’

‘’Twill be thirsty work, Cap’n!’

‘Ye may broach a keg - but not till the work’s finished, mind!’ Pike headed for the Church.

‘Is there loot in the church too, Cap’n?’ asked Gaptooth eagerly.

Pike rounded on him. ‘Do as you’re bid you dog, or I’ll leave you in that coffin for a souvenir. Set the men to work

- lively now!’ Pike disappeared inside the church.

Not too far away, Exciseman Blake was leading a sweating file of soldiers along at a jog trot behind his exhausted plodding horse. He had had a breakneck ride across country to the nearest town - almost literally so when he fell from his horse. For a moment or two he was stunned, but sheer determination made him struggle to his feet, recapture his mount and go on his way. It had taken hard talking to persuade the commander of the local militia to let him have the troops he needed. At last he’d been granted a platoon of men and a sergeant. Not the best men either, Blake suspected, but they’d have to do.

‘Hurry the men along there, Sergeant,’ called Blake impatiently. The Sergeant gave him a murderous look, and the platoon stumbled on its way.

In the crypt Cherub’s patience was wearing thin. The curse had distracted him for a while, but in the end greed had proved stronger than fear.

He held the pistol to Polly’s head. ‘Now, sawbones, your time is up. Speak, or your young friend dies.’

‘What would you have the Doctor say, Cherub, me boyo?’

Cherub looked up and saw Pike towering at the top of the stairs, hook gleaming at the end of his right arm, a cutlass in his left hand. ‘Why, here you be at last, Cap’n! I got the sawbones for ye!’

‘Got him for me, ye say, Cherub?’

‘For us, Cap’n...’

‘You deserted ship, Cherub,’ said Pike gently.

‘To spy out the land for ye, Cap’n. I knew there was trickery afoot. Didn’t I say so, time and again?’

‘Trickery right enough,’ said Pike. ‘I never did trust that tongue of yours, Cherub. It’s a might too like an archangel’s!’

‘I found the sawbones for ye, didn’t I Cap’n?’

‘Aye, and you’d have found the gold soon too, eh?’

‘I made him tell me Holy Joe’s riddle. He was a-going to spill the whole cargo. I wasn’t going to let no one do you down, Cap’n. He’d have nabbed the whole lot for himself for sure. He’d have done for you, he would!’

All the time the two men were talking, Pike was stalking slowly down the steps, and Cherub backing away. He thrust Polly from him and she ran to the Doctor. Pike swung round toward the Doctor, half-turning his back on Cherub. ‘So that was your game, was it, sawbones?’

As soon as Pike was turned away, Cherub raised his pistol to shoot him in the back.

‘Look out!’ shouted Polly instinctively.

But Pike was ready. He whirled, slashing the pistol from Cherub’s hand with his cutlass so it discharged harmlessly in the air. Pike sprang back, drawing his own cutlass from his belt. The Doctor pulled Polly and Ben aside, and all three stood huddled by the wounded Squire, who was watching with bright feverish eyes. The two pirates circled each other warily in the confined space, cutlass and knife against cutlass and hook.

‘You’ve met your doom now, Cherub, me boyo,’

whispered Pike.

Cherub's smile was at its most seraphic. 'Not from a pig like you, Pike!'

'I'll quarter you, you rat-faced smiler,' threatened Pike.

'Only watch for the hook, me boyo, for when it whistles its the end of ye!'

Suddenly Pike lunged with the hook, but Cherub parried with his dagger. Cutlass rang against cutlass and the fight went on. The exchange of threats was over now and the two pirates cut, thrust and parried in grim silence.

The only sound was the ring of steel against steel, the stamp of booted feet against flagstones and the hoarse breathing of the contestants. They seemed pretty evenly matched, for if Pike was both bigger and stronger, Cherub was more agile and more skilled. They fought with savage recklessness, hurling themselves against each other with incredible force, fighting at a pace that couldn't last.

'Doctor, it's just like the Squire said,' whispered Polly.

'It's Avery's curse!'

'Dead right,' said Ben. 'One of those two is going to snuff it...'

The fight went on.

In the graveyard the work of unloading the smugglers'

hidden store was going slowly. It was too much like real work for the pirates' liking - they weren't mere smugglers after all - and Gaptooth had little real authority with Pike away. Moreover there was the constant temptation of the brandy kegs. Gaptooth knew well that once the crew tasted that, they'd be uncontrollable.

'Get on there, you bilge rats,' he snarled in an unconvincing attempt at Pike's tone. Suddenly he saw Spaniard attempting to open a brandy keg with his knife.

'Belay that, Spaniard!' Spaniard didn't say anything - he couldn't, having lost his tongue in a dispute many years ago - but he sneered horribly. 'Have a care,' warned Gaptooth. 'If Pike finds you idling you'll lose your ears as well as your tongue!'

For a moment the mention of Pike's name had its effect

- but not for long. Flourishing his knife, Spaniard mimed his fixed, determined intention to open the keg. His fellow pirates cheered. Gaptooth knew that the cause was lost. If he tried to stop them drinking now they'd slit his throat and drink anyway. Pike shouldn't have vanished like that.

Making the best of a bad job, Gaptooth shouted, 'To be sure lads, you've the right to a tot and you shall have it. But not you, Spaniard - you can go to the beach and guard the boats!' Spaniard slouched mutinously off, spitting at Gaptooth's feet as he passed by.

One of the pirates grabbed a brandy keg, knocked out the bung with a marlin-spike, lifted the keg on high and poured brandy down his throat. Another pirate grabbed it, and the keg began passing around the eager circle.

Gaptooth sighed.

In the crypt the death duel was still going on but the pace was slower now. The two men fought more carefully, saving energy. Completely absorbed in each other, they scarcely seemed aware of their former captives. The Doctor was kneeling by the Squire, binding his wound.

'Now's our chance,' urged Ben. 'Come on you lot, down the passage to the TARDIS.'

'You must take Polly, Ben,' said the Doctor. 'I can't leave the Squire with these ruffians, and we can't move him. I'll follow you as soon as I know Mr Blake and the militia are here.'

‘I won’t leave you here alone,’ sobbed Polly.

‘My dear, it’s the best way,’ said the Doctor gently.

‘Without either of you two they’ll have no hostages to force my hand.’

‘They could still start on you,’ Ben pointed out.

‘I handled them before,’ said the Doctor confidently.

‘It’s only a matter of playing for time. Please, Polly, go with Ben.’ He handed Ben a TARDIS key.

Sheathing his dagger, Cherub snatched up the dead Kewper’s pistol and fired. In his haste he missed, and the bullet sang over Polly’s head.

‘Come on Polly, down to the TARDIS,’ said Ben firmly.

Grabbing her arm he led her over to the tomb that masked the entrance and shoved it aside. Polly disappeared down the steps and Ben called, ‘I’ll give you fifteen minutes, Doctor, then I’m coming back for you.’

The Doctor didn’t hear him - he was too absorbed by the fight. He sensed it was nearing its end now. Cherub was flagging and Pike’s superior strength beginning to tell.

In desperation, Cherub hurled his trusty dagger - Pike disappeared behind a pillar and the dagger clattered to the floor. There was a moment of silence. Cherub looked round. Pike seemed to have disappeared. Suddenly the Doctor saw Pike’s head appear from behind a nearby tomb.

With amazing agility, Pike leaped up onto the tomb.

‘Back to your hell-hole, Cherub lad!’ he screamed, and hurled himself through the air at his opponent. Cherub staggered back and stumbled against the angel that ornamented the side of another tomb. Pike landed catlike before him, raised his cutlass and cut Cherub down with one savage blow. The fight was over.

Wiping the blood from his cutlass on Cherub’s shirt, Pike whirled round and ran to the Doctor, holding his cutlass to the Doctor’s throat. ‘Now, old man,’ he said hoarsely. ‘The time has come!’ He raised his sword.

12

The Treasure

The Doctor regarded the threatening blade with his usual calm dignity. ‘I think we’re both agreed on that, Captain.’

Pike lowered his blade. ‘You’ll tell me the secret?’

‘Of course. It was always my intention to tell you.’

‘Is that why you fled my ship?’

‘I had no choice, my friends were in danger.’

‘Aye, the two lads. Where have they got to, sawbones?’

‘Tell him nothing,’ croaked the Squire.

Pike looked down at him. ‘Still alive, my fine gentleman?’

‘Aye, and I’ll live to see you hanged, Pike.’

‘Think you so, Squire?’ said Pike, and raised his sword.

‘Stop!’ ordered the Doctor. ‘I made a bargain with you.

Don’t you want to keep it?’

‘Speak on,’ growled Pike.

‘I will still keep my side of the bargain, Captain. But if I may, I’d like to change the terms...’

Down on the beach, Spaniard was bored. He and another pirate called Daniel, also on boat duty, were the only ones sober by now, and the sound of carousing from the clifftop told them what they were missing. There was a cave mouth near where the boats were beached and Spaniard wandered into it, idly exploring. Minutes later he was back on the beach, tugging Daniel’s sleeve, urging him to come and see. Shrugging, Daniel followed. Spaniard led him to a strange blue box. There it was, mysteriously standing just inside the cave entrance. The two pirates studied it, walked round it, tapped and prodded it and gave up, totally baffled. Spaniard grabbed Daniel’s sleeve again, showing him that the cave turned into a kind of tunnel, running on behind the TARDIS and up into the cliff. They began to explore...

‘Strange terms indeed, Doctor,’ said Pike.

‘Human terms, I should say,’ replied the Doctor.

‘You want none of the gold?’

‘I should rather not touch it.’

‘Scared of Avery’s curse, eh?’

‘My reasons need not concern you, Captain. I doubt if you’d understand them. The point is that I give up all claim to the gold, which I can deliver immediately -’

‘If I keep my lads away from the village?’

‘Precisely. There is no reason for the innocent to suffer.’

‘Well said, Doctor,’ whispered the Squire feebly.

‘I like my lads to be happy,’ said Pike thoughtfully.

‘They work better... when they’re allowed their fun.’

‘You will have Avery’s treasure and our contraband stores as well, you villain,’ said the Squire. ‘Will not that content you?’

‘We have an uneasy conscience, do we, Squire?’ snarled Pike. ‘You lily-livered rogue, you dare call *me* a villain!’

‘I have been a rogue too, I feebly admit it, and the generosity of this stranger shames me. But I have never spilled blood in my villainy. I beg you - as a fellow rogue if you will - to spare my poor villagers.’

Pike shrugged, unmoved. ‘When my lads have the killing fever in their blood ‘tis only blood will slake it...’

‘Senseless destruction,’ said the Doctor wearily.

‘It’s by way of being a pastime with them. Why should I stop it?’

‘ *Could* you stop it?’ challenged the Squire. ‘Or would you rather let them run mad than test their obedience?’

‘No man of my crew defies me and lives. They’d do as I bid, or die of it!’

‘Then prove it,’ said the Doctor. ‘Accept my terms.’

‘Very well,’ said Pike at last. ‘We’ll pack up and go -

once the gold is mine!’

‘I suppose I must trust you,’ said the Doctor drily.

‘You must, Doctor. And heed the fate of Cherub, yonder.’

‘Oh, don’t worry, I won’t try to trick you as he did.’

‘Then out with it Doctor! Show me the gold!’

‘Come on, Polly,’ urged Ben, ‘we’re nearly there.’ He was hurrying her down the steep, rocky tunnel.

Suddenly Polly stumbled on the uneven floor. ‘Ouch!’

‘You okay, Duchess?’

She tried her ankle and found she could walk. ‘I think so. How much further?’

‘About another hundred yards, just round that bend.’

‘Why don’t you go back and get the Doctor, then?’

Ben was tempted. ‘Sure you’ll be all right?’

‘Of course I will. Now hurry. I’ll see you back in the TARDIS.’

Ben handed her the key. ‘Okay. Put the kettle on!’ He hurried back the way they had come.

Limping a little, Polly moved ahead.

‘There were four names in the Churchwarden’s riddle,’

said the Doctor. ‘Ringwood, Smallbeer, Gurney, Deadman.’

‘All names of Avery’s old crew,’ said Pike. A thought struck him. ‘How come they be buried here? They died at sea, every last one of ‘em.’

‘The original names were no doubt altered by the Churchwarden,’ said the Doctor briskly.

Pike was beginning to understand. ‘As a marker, like?’

‘That is correct,’ said the Doctor, like a teacher with a dim pupil. ‘Now, the name plaques for the four names are here, here, here and - here. And as you can see they form the four corners of a square. Now, if we draw in imaginary lines for the diagonals of that square, they intersect on this flagstone - here! As you can see, it is loose. I think this is what you seek.’

‘Stand back,’ ordered Pike hoarsely. Wedging his hook in the chink in the flagstones, he heaved mightily - and the flagstone slowly lifted. When the gap was wide enough for his fingers, Pike heaved it aside to reveal a square of blackness. ‘What’s this, I can see nothing... He groped inside the hole. ‘How deep it is...’

‘What have you found?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Nothing, damn your eyes... No, what’s this?’ Pike straightened up, pulling back his arm. Dangling from his hook was a huge rope of pearls. ‘Oh, what now...’ breathed Pike. ‘What price that damned Avery now?’

Suddenly the sound of pistol or musket shots came down the stairs, together with fierce yells and the clash of steel...

‘What’s that?’ snarled Pike. ‘If this is a trap, old sawbones, you’ll end up under that stone yourself!’ He ran up the stairs yelling, ‘Ahoy there, what in hell’s afoot?

Answer me, Gaptooth, damn your eyes...’

In the churchyard a one-sided battle was raging. It was one-sided because Pike’s men, drunk and out of their element had been taken completely by surprise by Blake and his militiamen. In ordered ranks the soldiers knelt, fired, re-loaded and fired again, rank by rank in turn so that there was continuous withering fire. The pirates fought back bravely but haphazardly. They blazed away with pistols, usually missing, and found they had no more ammunition. They made wild screaming charges waving their cutlasses, and were calmly and efficiently shot down or bayoneted by the stolid soldiers. The pirates depended for their successes on the fear they inspired in their opponents, who were usually ordinary merchant seamen or the terrified inhabitants of coastal towns. It was rare that they encountered trained and disciplined troops, and they just weren’t up to it... Not a single one of them made it back to their ship. Finally a desperate rearguard fell back into the vestry itself, and fought valiantly to hold it.

Remorselessly the soldiers started to close in...

Polly soon emerged on the beach outside the cave. She stood there for a moment enjoying the evening air.

Suddenly two pirates emerged out of the shadows. Polly screamed and ran. She dodged back into the cave, instinctively heading for it as a sanctuary. ‘Ben, help me,’

she screamed. But she was still slowed down by her limp, and soon the leading pirate - in fact it was Spaniard -

caught up with her and flung her to the ground, standing over her with a drawn cutlass. The second pirate ran up, and Polly’s captor waved him on. Knife in hand the second pirate headed up the tunnel...

In the distance, Ben heard the faint echo of Polly’s screams. He turned and raced back down the tunnel. He was approaching the far end when he heard someone moving stealthily along the tunnel. Ducking behind a fallen rock, Ben saw the approaching pirate creep towards him, knife in hand. Crouching, Ben let the pirate run past him, then leaped out and struck him down from behind.

Leaping over the pirate’s unconscious body, Ben ran back down the tunnel.

Polly had got over her shock by now, and was feeling angry. Suddenly she leaped to her feet and tried to run away. Her captor grabbed her and they grappled furiously.

Polly tried to call for help, a grimy hand was clapped over her mouth and she bit it - hard.

Suddenly Ben shot down the tunnel and hurled himself onto the struggling pair. Both were knocked off their feet, and the sword flew from the pirate’s hand, clattering on to the rocks. Ben kicked it further away, but by this time the pirate was on his feet, knife in hand. Seizing the knife-wrist, Ben grappled with him.

The battle outside the church had entered a new phase.

The few surviving pirates had barricaded themselves in the church vestry, and were proving difficult to dislodge.

Suddenly Blake had a bright idea. Leaving most of the militiamen to lay siege to the church, he detached a handful of them and led them away from the church and down the path to the beach.

Ben was putting up a valiant fight, but the pirate was older and stronger, an experienced dirty fighter - and he had a knife. Half-stunning Ben with a savage head-butt, the pirate raised his knife for the kill... Suddenly a shot rang out and the pirate fell back dead. Struggling to his feet, Ben saw Blake and his militiamen running along the beach.

Polly ran to meet them. 'Mr Blake! Thank heavens you've come.'

'Stand aside,' said Blake brusquely. 'Our work lies above!' He led his men into the cave.

'I'm with you, mate,' called Ben. 'Stay by the TARDIS, Polly. We'll meet you there later!' He ran off after Blake and the soldiers.

The pressure of the militia attack had forced the pirates out of the vestry and the battle was now raging on the steps that led down to the crypt. A struggling mass of soldiers and pirates surged to and fro on the steps. For once the pirates had something of an advantage. There was no room for the effective use of muskets or even bayonets, and the pirates' knives were coming into their own. All too frequently a soldier fell, stabbed by an opponent he could scarcely see, let alone reach.

Pike was crouching by the raised flagstone that gave access to the treasure, fishing out pearls and diamonds and gold bracelets with his hook and stuffing them into a little chest he'd found in the vestry cupboard. All the time he was shouting encouragement to his men, who were buying him the time to loot with their lives. 'Fight, ye black-hearted scum. There's gold for all if we can but reach the ship!'

The Doctor meanwhile was frantically trying to open the entrance to the tunnel to the beach. However, since he hadn't really paid attention when Ben found it, he found he couldn't find the section of moulding that released the secret catch.

Suddenly the tomb seemed to move of its own accord, and the Doctor was swept aside as Blake and his militiamen poured out of the tunnel, attacking the pirates in the rear.

Pike looked up and realised what was happening.

'Sawbones, you Neptune's curse,' he yelled. 'You've led me into a trap. For that you'll die by my hook!' With fierce determination, he began battling his way towards the Doctor, kept apart from him by the struggling figures all around. Backing away, the Doctor stumbled over the body of the semi-conscious Squire, and fell headlong. Picking himself up, he found himself facing Ben, who had emerged from the tunnel in the wake of Blake and the soldiers.

'Are you all right, Doctor?'

'Perfectly, thank you. But I'm worried about the Squire.

We must get him out of here...'

While Pike was struggling to reach the Doctor, Blake was struggling to get at Pike. 'Captain Pike - surrender I say,' he bellowed.

'And lose Avery's gold? Never!' He brandished his hook at the Doctor. 'I'm coming for you, sawbones. See if your tricks can save you now!'

Suddenly the final stages of the battle came close to them, and Ben found himself swept away from the Doctor.

At the same moment, Pike burst through the crowd. He raised his hook. 'Here's an end to ye, sawbones, damn your eyes...'

Somehow, despite his wound the Squire managed to haul himself to his feet. With the last vestiges of his strength he caught Pike's hook-arm and held it. For a moment the two men were locked, poised... Just long enough for Blake to raise his pistol, take careful aim and fire.

Pike staggered backwards, reeled for a moment, then crashed forward like a felled tree. His hook-arm was flung out before him, reaching for the overturned chest half-filled with Avery's treasure. With the death of Pike the heart went out of the pirates, and the few still alive and fighting surrendered.

The Doctor caught Ben's eye and they began sidling towards the entrance to the tunnel...

Blake was kneeling by the Squire. 'Fear not, Squire, the day is ours now.' He looked round. 'Where is the old man, the Doctor, and his young friends. We owe them our thanks...'

But the Doctor, Ben and Polly were nowhere to be seen...

Blake moved to the tunnel entrance and said quietly,

'Godspeed, old man.' Then he turned away. There was much to be done...

Polly was waiting anxiously by the TARDIS when Ben's voice called, 'Polly? Are you there?'

She saw Ben and the Doctor coming down the tunnel towards her, battle-weary but apparently unharmed.

'Thank heavens you're both safe. Are you all right, Doctor?'

The Doctor staggered, and put out his hand to steady himself. 'I'm quite all right, my child. Just a little exhausted.'

Polly opened the TARDIS door and they went inside. A few minutes later, the blue Police box faded away...

Inside the TARDIS, Ben was giving Polly an account of their adventures. She shuddered at the biory of the Doctor's narrow escape from Pike's hook.

'Still, Blake's mob beat 'em in the end,' concluded Ben.

Polly said slowly, 'And now they're all dead. The Churchwarden, Kewper, Cherub, Pike... all the ones who wanted Avery's treasure...'

The Doctor was leaning back in his chair, his eyes half closed. 'Superstitions are very strange, you know.

Especially when they seem to come true...'

Polly was watching the rise and fall of the central control column. 'Where will we end up next, Doctor? Will we go forward or back in Time?'

'I've no control over such things, my dear child,' said the Doctor airily.

'It had better be 1966, or I'm in dead trouble,' said Ben.

He brightened. 'Still, whenever it is, it can't be worse than what we've just been through in them old days...'

'It could be better,' said the Doctor judicially. 'On the other hand, it could be a great deal worse. He opened his eyes and smiled at them. 'We shall just have to wait and see!'

Polly realised that the Doctor had made one of his amazing recoveries. He was already looking forward to a new adventure. Funnily enough, so was she.

The central column was already slowing its rise and fall.

The Doctor leaned forward, studying the console. 'Well, well, well,' he said happily. 'We seem to be making another landing!'

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